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WALLACE SIEGEL

TRAVELLERS' TALES

A BOOK OF MARVELS

BY H. C. ADAMS

DECORATIONS BY
WILLIAM SIEGEL

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NEW YORK
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NOTE

This work originally appeared in the year 1882. The author of Travellers' Tales was the Rev. H. C. Adams, M.A., Vicar of Old Shoreham, Sussex.

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INTRODUCTION

THERE is a strange perverseness in human nature which induces it oftentimes to discredit what is not only true, but well attested, at the same time that it lends an ear to the most extravagant untruths. Captain Marryat has well hit this off in one of the most amusing of his nautical novels.

"Your observations," he makes one of his characters say, "remind me of the story of the old woman and her grandson. You recollect it, I presume?"

"Indeed I do not," said Captain M——, "pray favour us with it."

The first lieutenant then narrated, with a considerable degree of humour, the following story:

"A lad, who had been some years at sea, returned home to his aged grandmother, who was naturally curious to hear some of his adventures. 'Now, Jack,' said the old woman, 'tell me all you've seen, and tell me the most wonderful things first.'

" 'Well, granny, when we were in the Red Sea, we anchored close to the shore, and when we hove the anchor up, there was a chariot-wheel hanging to it.'

" 'Oh! Jack, Pharaoh and his host were drowned in the Red Sea, you know; that proves the Bible is all true. Well, Jack, and what else did you see?'

" 'Why, granny, when I was in the West Indies, I saw whole mountains of sugar, and the rivers between them were all rum.'

" 'True, true,' said the old woman, smacking her lips, 'we get all the sugar and rum from there, you know. Pray, Jack, have you ever seen a mermaid?'

" 'Why, no, mother; but I've seen a merman.'

" 'Well, Jack, let's hear.'

" 'Why, mother, when we anchored to the northward of St. Kitts one Sunday morning, a voice hailed us from along-

side, and when we looked over, there was a merman just come to the top of the water; he stroked down his hair, and touched it, as we do our hats, to the captain, and told him that he would feel much obliged to him to trip his anchor, as it had been let go just before the door of his house below, which they could not open in consequence, and his wife would be too late to go to church.'

" 'God bless me,' said the old woman, 'why, they're Christians, I do declare! And now, Jack, tell me something more.'

"Jack, whose invention was probably exhausted, then told her that he had seen hundreds of fishes flying in the air.

" 'Come, come, Jack,' said the old woman, 'now you're bamming me! Don't attempt to put such stories off on your old granny! The chariot-wheel I can believe, because it is likely; the sugar and rum I know to be true; and also the merman, for I have seen pictures of them. But as for fish flying in the air, Jack—that's a lie.' "

"Excellent," said Captain M——; "then the only part that was true, she rejected, believing all the monstrous lies that he had coined." ("King's Own," pp. 263, 264.)

There is a great deal of truth in this amusing piece of humour. A novel and startling fact—such as the one he himself adduces in the story—of a large spermaceti whale having been found with a spongy excrescence growing out of its head, which had all the appearance of a rock, and was so buoyant, that the animal, in spite of all its efforts, could not dive under water—let it be ever so well attested by numerous and competent witnesses, would most likely be disbelieved, and bring upon its narrator the charge of falsehood; whereas any stories, which fall in with popular belief, will pass without challenge, however untenable they may really be.

We shall endeavour to avoid both these errors in the ensuing chapters, and while carefully examining what travellers into comparatively unknown lands have related, and accepting nothing for which reasonable evidence cannot be produced, abstain from charging falsehood or exaggeration on any writer, without sufficient proof that he is amenable to it.

For convenience's sake it will be better to consider the subject under several heads; dealing, first, with ancient travellers; secondly, with those of mediæval, and, thirdly, with those of modern times; then to proceed to subjects of special interest, respecting which these travellers have given us their reports.

ANCIENT TRAVELLERS

Chapter I

Sindbad—First Two Voyages

In the last generation there prevailed, I believe, a general opinion that the "Arabian Nights" was a simple romance, of comparatively modern composition, having no more historical truth than Southey's "Thalaba," or Swift's "Gulliver's Travels." But recent research has entirely dissipated this idea. At whatever time these stories may have been collected into the volume called the "Thousand-and-One Nights," many of the stories themselves are of very remote antiquity—composed in prehistoric times, in fact, and handed down by oral tradition, long before they could have been committed to writing. The tales which pass under the title of Sindbad are among the most ancient of any—supposing them, that is to say, to be all of one date. Thus the first was evidently composed before the discovery of the mariner's compass: and that, although unknown in Europe before the twelfth century, was in use in the seas navigated by Sindbad in the very earliest times. The stories of the Valley of Diamonds again, and the one-eyed giant who feeds on human flesh, are told by writers who lived at the very outset of history. Some one, in the days of the Caliph Haroun, appears to have remodelled the Adventures of Sindbad, and reissued them in a modern shape; just as the Adventures of Robinson Crusoe are rewritten in every successive age, under new names, to please the fancies of contemporaries. Whether Sindbad was a real, or an imaginary, personage, invented merely to connect the

voyages together—it is impossible to determine. There is nothing to forbid the former supposition—indeed there is a consistency and simplicity of character about him, which gives the idea that he is not a man of straw, but of genuine flesh and blood. We may assume him to be a reality, without doing any great violence to probability, and proceed to examine the narrative of his voyages, which he is represented as relating to a number of guests assembled round his board.

He begins his first voyage by saying that he set sail from Balsora (Bussorah) on the Persian Gulf, and steered towards what he calls the East Indies, the port for which he is bound being the Island of Vak-vak (or Japan). This he describes as being distant from Balsora four thousand five hundred leagues—only a few thousand miles wrong, a mere nothing in the calculations of those days. His geography, when he gets beyond the Persian Gulf, becomes perplexing. He describes the coasts of India, Siam, Assam and China, as the "coast of Abyssinia,"—which term, together with that of Ethiopia, appears to be used to signify any land whatsoever that is not well known to the narrator. One day, when it may be presumed the ship had reached the Laccadives, he tells us that he "was unexpectedly becalmed, when close to a small island appearing just above the water, and from its verdure resembling a beautiful meadow. The captain ordered the sails to be lowered, and gave permission to those who wished it, to go ashore, of which number, I (Sindbad) formed one. But during the time that we were regaling ourselves with eating and drinking, by way of relaxation for the fatigue we had endured at sea, the island suddenly trembled, and we felt a severe shock. They who were in the ship, perceived the earthquake in the island, and immediately called to us to re-embark as soon as possible, or we should perish; for what we supposed to be an island was no more than the back of a whale. The most active of the party jumped into the boat, whilst others threw themselves into the water to swim for the ship. As for me, I was still on the island, or, more properly speaking, on the whale, when it plunged into the sea, and I

had only time to seize hold of a piece of wood, which had been brought on shore to make a fire with."

This certainly sounds like a big "fish-story." But, if it is one, Sindbad is, at all events, not the only person who has told it. El Kazweenee, the Oriental traveller, in his account of marine animals, writes, "The tortoise is a sea and land animal. As to the sea-tortoise, he is very enormous, so that the people of the ship, imagined it to be an island." One of the merchants relating his adventures says, "We found in the sea an island elevated above the water, having upon it green plants, and we landed on it and dug holes in which to make fires to cook our food. Thereupon the island moved, and the sailors said, 'Come ye to your place, for it is a tortoise, and the heat of the fire hath burnt it, lest it carry you away.' By reason of the enormity of its body," he continues, "it was as though it were an island, and earth had collected on its back in the length of time."

"The whale," says Olaus Magnus, "has over its skin a surface, which is like to the sand which is on the sea-shore. From which circumstance, when his back is raised above the waves, it is thought by sailors to be nothing but an island. Therefore the mariners put in there, land upon it, drive in stakes from their ships, and light fires to cook their food, until presently, the whale feeling the fire, dives down into the deep water, and those who are abiding on his back are drowned, unless they can clear themselves of him by the help of ropes fastened to the ship."

The possibility of such an occurrence, appears to be believed by a much greater authority than either of the two above-named, no less a personage than John Milton himself. In Book I of Paradise Lost he writes of the whale—

> "Which God of all his works
> Created hugest to swim the ocean's flood.
> Him haply slumbering on the Norway foam,
> The pilot of some small night-foundered skiff
> Deeming some island, *oft,* as seamen tell,
> With fixed anchor in his scaly rind,
> Moors at his side."—*Paradise Lost,* i.

But it may be urged that whatever El Kazweenee, Olaus or Milton may think, they cannot render the story less improbable. No: but let us consider these improbabilities. No sailor, it is said, would intentionally lay his ship close to the shore of an island. Well, not in the present day, certainly. But before the discovery of the mariner's compass, it was the regular practice to do so. However dangerous a lee-shore might be, the peril of being driven out of sight of land, knowing no mode of regaining it, was accounted greater still. Under such circumstances they might wander over the illimitable ocean until their provisions failed them, and they perished of hunger. It will be remembered in St. Paul's voyage (Acts xxvii. 15, 16) how when keeping close to the Cretan coast, "When the ship was caught, and could not bear up into the wind, they ran her under a small island called Clauda," for shelter. Even centuries afterwards, experienced sailors like Diaz and Gama, were always unwilling to venture out of sight of land, but would hug the shore as close as they could venture. There is nothing unlikely, therefore, but the contrary, in Sindbad's vessel having been run close to the supposed island.

Then as regards its size—this is of course the great difficulty. There is no doubt that whales and tortoises were to be met with in very early times greatly larger than is the case now. If we were to credit what the naturalists of those days tell us, there would be no difficulty about this story at all. Eratosthenes says that whales are to be met with fifty cubits (seventy-five feet) long. Nearchus increases the length to a hundred cubits; Onesicritus, to one hundred and fifty; and Juba, to two hundred cubits.

But these statements are modesty itself, compared with those of other writers. "In the Indian seas," says Pliny, "there are whales four acres in size, filling as much ground as some cities occupy." Saint Basil and Ambrose represent them as floating islands, and mountains reaching to Heaven. But no writers can for a moment compare with the Talmudists, of whom Bochart says quaintly that "On this subject

they lie with great liberality." The most moderate dimensions which they assign to a whale are five hundred stadia (or furlongs): they assert that it takes three days for a ship to sail from one end of these great fishes to the other: and finally one of the rabbis affirms that the creature occupies a space "one seventh of the whole world!"

These monstrous figments are simply the repetitions made, without inquiry, by one writer of the statements advanced by another, with exaggerations of his own, to stimulate the interest and wonder of his readers. They are utterly valueless; but the consent of more sober authorities goes to prove that in very ancient times whales and other marine animals were greatly larger than any now extant. Nor is it by any means impossible that in the dusk of the evening one of these huge creatures may really have been mistaken for an island, though the sailors could hardly have landed without at once discovering the error.

The story of the sea-horse which follows is also regarded as a mere fable. But the meaning of the narrator has, in all likelihood, been misunderstood. It has been proved that there really was such a king as Mihragé,[1] and that he possessed a fine breed of horses, which he improved by importing males of a still finer race from a neighbouring island. These would very likely be called "horses of the sea," as the aborigines of America called the Spaniards "men of the sea," because they came to them over the sea. Sindbad's narrative, therefore, may be a true narrative, only allegorically told.

Thus much of Sindbad's first voyage. The second is even more full of striking incident. He relates how he and his fellow-voyagers sail from island to island, until they land upon one which is apparently uninhabited. Here he strays away from his companions, who sail away without him. He climbs a tree in the hope of discovering some human abode, and sees in the distance a white object, to which he makes his way. As he draws nearer, he perceives that it is an enormous white ball, and approaching close, he finds it soft to the touch.

[1] See Hole's and Lane's notes *in loco.*

He walks around it, but can find no opening anywhere, and it is so smooth that he cannot ascend it.

Quite perplexed he remains looking at it till sunset, when the air grows suddenly dark, as if obscured by a thick cloud, which he beholds approaching. As it draws nearer, he discovers that the supposed cloud is in reality an enormous bird, and remembers having heard the sailors speak of a prodigious creature of this kind, called a roc, and conjectures that the great white circular mass must be its egg. In this he finds

he is not mistaken, for the monster alights and proceeds to sit on the egg. He approaches and notices the claw, which is as big as the trunk of a large tree. This suggests to him a mode of escaping from his difficulties. He takes off and unfolds his turban, and ties himself by it to the roc's leg. In the morning the bird flies away, and carries him with it to such a height that he cannot distinguish the earth. Then it descends with equal rapidity. As soon as it reaches the ground Sindbad unties the knot, and has scarcely released himself, when the bird seizes a huge serpent in its beak and flies away with it.

Here are two circumstances, both of which, I suppose, appear quite incredible to the general reader—first the pro-

digious size ascribed to the egg, and mother-bird, and secondly the incident of Sindbad's being carried by the latter through the air, in the manner described. As regards the first of these two matters—the size of the roc and other birds—that will be considered in a subsequent chapter: the second we will examine now. It may certainly be affirmed that there exists no bird at the present time which could carry anything like such a weight as that of a man of ordinary size, nor has any such existed in the recorded experience of any trustworthy writer. But as in the instance of the enormous fish, so here too, it must be observed that this story of Sindbad does not stand alone. Other independent authorities relate the same. The classical reader will remember the fable of Ganymede, who was said to have been carried up to the skies on the back of an eagle. The old Danish story, reproduced by Hans Andersen, describes a lady being similarly transported through the air by twelve swans. In the "Baital Pachisi" mention is made of Ganu, a gigantic bird with a human face, said to be the vehicle of Vishnu. The descent of Ganu is described in the fifteenth tale in the following terms:—

"The prince perceived that each leg of this bird was as long as four bamboos, that his beak was as long as a palm-tree, his belly like a mountain, his eyes like gates, and his feathers like clouds. All at once he rushed with open beak upon the prince. The first time the prince saved himself, but the second, the bird flew up with him in his beak, and began wheeling upwards with him in the air." ("Baital Pachisi," p. 126.)

El Kazweenee, the Arabian traveller, whom we have already quoted, has a story very like that of Sindbad's second voyage. It is contained in the "Khitab-el-Ajaib" (Book of Wonders), and is somewhat of the longest. But it is so much to the purpose, that it ought not to be omitted here.

"A man of Ispahan related to me, that he was burdened with debts, and the expenses of supporting his family. So he quitted Ispahan, and misfortune so accompanied him, that he went to sea with some merchants. 'The waves,' he says,

'beat us about, until we came to the well known whirlpool of the sea of Persia. Thereupon the merchants came to the master of the vessel, and said, "Dost thou know any escape from this whirlpool, except such as God may provide?"

" 'So, I said, "O people, we are all in a place of destruction, and I am a man wearied by misery, and I wish for death." Now there was in the ship a party of men from Ispahan. I said therefore to them, "Swear that ye will discharge my debts, and act with beneficence to my children, and I will ransom you at the cost of my own life." And I said to the master of the ship, "What dost thou command me to do?" He answered "I command that thou stand upon this island"—for there was near unto the whirlpool an island, the extent of which was six days' and six nights' journey—"and that thou cease not to beat this drum." So I replied, "I will do it."

" 'Accordingly they swore to me severe oaths that they would comply with the conditions that I had imposed upon them; and they gave me water and food, which would suffice me for some days. And I stood on the shores of the island, and began to beat the drum. Whereupon I beheld the waters move, while I looked at the ship until it was out of sight. Then I went to and fro upon the island, and, lo! I beheld an enormous tree, such as I have not seen any greater, and upon it was something like a large roof. At the close of the day I heard a great vehement, harsh voice, and, lo! a huge bird, than which I have not seen any greater, came and alighted upon the roof of that tree. So I hid myself, fearing lest he should make me his prey, until the light of the morning approached, when he shook his wings and flew away. The next night he came again, and alighted upon his nest, and I was again in despair of my life, and contented to await destruction. I approached him, but he shewed no hostility to me, and flew away in the morning. And when the third night came, I sat by him without consternation, until he shook his wings at daybreak. On his doing so, I laid hold upon his legs, and he flew away with me, with a most rapid flight, until the daybreak arose, when I looked towards the earth, and

saw naught save an abyss of water. Upon this I was about to quit my hold of his legs by reason of the violence of the pain that affected me. But I constrained myself to have patience, and looking again at the earth, I beheld the villages or towns, and the people gazing at the bird. Then it approached the earth, and set me down upon a heap of straw in a threshing-floor belonging to one of the villagers.' "

Benjamin of Tudela again, a Jewish rabbi and eastern traveller of the 12th century, has a similar tale. "Sometimes," he writes, "this sea (near Ceylon) is so stormy, that no mariner can conduct his vessel, and when a storm throws a ship into this sea, it is impossible to govern it. The crew and passengers consume their provisions, and then die miserably. Many vessels have been lost in this way; but people have learned how to save themselves from this fate by the following contrivance. They take bullocks' hides along with them, and whenever the storm arises and throws them into the sea of Niphka, they sew themselves up in the hides, taking care to have a knife in their hands, and being thus secured against sea-water, they throw themselves into the ocean. Here they are soon perceived by a large eagle called a griffin, which takes them for cattle, darts down, seizes them in its grip, and carrying them off, deposits the burden on a hill, or in a dale, there to consume its prey. The man, however, now makes use of his knife to kill the bird, creeps forth from the hide, and tries to reach an inhabited country. Many persons have been saved by this stratagem."

"The same story," says Colonel Yule, "occurs in a Latin poem at least as old as the beginning of the thirteenth century, which relates the romantic adventures of Duke Ernest of Bavaria. The duke and his companions, while navigating some unknown parts of the Euxine, fall within the fatal attraction of a magnet mountain. The ship goes to pieces, the crew die of starvation, and their bodies are carried away by huge gryphons. One of the party suggests to the duke that they should wrap themselves up in skins, and allow the birds to carry them alive to their nests, where they could draw their

weapons, and deliver themselves from being devoured; which scheme is duly carried out."

Sir John Maundeville also mentions these eagles of Tudela's, and declares them to possess even greater strength than that assigned them. "In that country" (the isles beyond China), he writes, "are many griffins, more abundant than in any other country. Some men say that they have the body upward of an eagle, and beneath of a lion, and that is true (!). But one griffin has a greater body and is stronger than eight lions, and greater and stronger than a hundred eagles. For one griffin there will carry a great horse, or two oxen yoked together, as they go at the plough" (Maund. ch. 26).

Sindbad having been left by the roc, examines the spot in which he finds himself. It is a deep valley, surrounded on all sides by mountains so high and so steep, that there was no possibility of climbing them. In walking about the valley, he perceives that it is strewn with diamonds, some of which are of an astonishing size. But there are also other objects, by no means so pleasant to contemplate. The whole neighbourhood swarms with serpents of an enormous size, so long and large, that the smallest of them could have swallowed an elephant with ease. Presently he is startled by a piece of raw meat, which had evidently been flung from above. He remembers to have heard of the famous "Valley of Diamonds," into which merchants were in the habit of throwing whole carcases of newly-skinned sheep, to which the diamonds adhered; and the lumps of meat, being carried up by the eagles, to feed their young with, the diamonds were brought up with them. He resolves to escape from the ravine by the same egency, which had brought him into it. He fills his pockets with the largest diamonds he can find, and then ties himself to a huge piece of meat. This is duly conveyed by one of the eagles to its nest, and Sindbad is delivered from his perilous situation.

I suppose, again, the whole of this narrative is viewed by most readers as pure and simple fiction. But that it certainly is not. The great difficulty of it is—what has already been

noted—the question whether there ever existed in very remote times, a bird of sufficient strength to carry off a man in the way described. As regards the rest of the story, there is plenty of evidence to show that it is no fiction at all.

El Kazweenee writes: "To the place in which the diamonds are found, no one can get access. It is a valley in the land of India, the bottom of which the sight reacheth not; and in it are enormous serpents, which no one seeth but he dieth. They have a summer abode for six months, and a winter abode, where they hide themselves for a like period. El Iskender (Alexander the Great, it is generally believed) commanded to take some mirrors, and to throw them into the valley, in order that the serpents might see in them their own forms, and die of the sight (a most original use to which to put a looking-glass, it must be admitted!). It is said that he watched for the time of their absenting themselves,—the winter, that is—and threw down pieces of meat, and the diamonds stuck to them. Then the birds came from the sky, and took pieces of that meat, and brought them up out of the valley. Whereupon El Iskender ordered his companions to follow the birds, and pick up what they easily could, of the meat."

Epiphanius, a Greek father of the fourth century, in his essay on the twelve stones in the breastplate of the high priest, writes, "The jacinth is nearly of the colour of fire. It is found in the interior of Scythia. There in the profoundest part of the Great Desert, there is a valley, which on every side is surrounded by stony mountains resembling walls. It is inaccessible to men, and of great depth, so that any one looking down upon it from the high mountain top cannot see the bottom of the valley; but, by reason of the depth of the locality, the darkness is so great, that it seems to be a kind of chaos. Men are sometimes sent thither by the king's order, who have been condemned on account of their crimes to repair thither. They kill lambs, skin them, and throw the carcases into the valley. The precious stones stick to the masses of flesh. But the eagles, which dwell on the mountain tops, attracted by the scent of the raw meats, fly down and carry off

the carcases, to which the stones adhere. They devour the flesh, but the stones remain on the mountain tops. Then those who have been sentenced to visit the spot, marking the places, where the eagles have fed on the meat, run up and carry off the stones."

Marco Polo tells very nearly the same story, only he mentions the snakes, which Epiphanius omits. "In the mountains of the kingdoms of Mutfili," he says, "the diamonds are found. During the rainy season, the water descends in violent torrents among the rocks and caverns, and when these have subsided, the people go to search for diamonds in the beds of the river, where they find many. Messer Marco was told that in the summer, when the heat is excessive and there is no rain, they ascend the mountains with great fatigue, as well as with considerable danger from the number of snakes, with which they are infested. Near the summit, it is said, there are deep chasms, surrounded by precipices, among which the diamonds are found, and here many eagles and white storks, attracted by the snakes, on which they feed, are accustomed to make their nests. The persons who are in quest of the diamonds, take their stand near the mouths of the caverns, and from thence cast down several pieces of flesh, which the eagles and storks pursue into the valleys, and carry off with them to the tops of the rocks. Thither the men immediately ascend, drive the birds away, and recovering the pieces of meat, frequently find diamonds sticking to them."

The three authors here quoted, could hardly have seen each other's writings,—living as they did in lands so remote, and having so little intercourse with one another. Polo might possibly have studied Epiphanius, but considering how little Greek was known in Europe in his day, and the early age at which he left his home, nothing is less likely than that he should have read the Bishop's narrative. The precise locality at which the Valley of Diamonds is fixed by the three authors is, no doubt, different. But the names Scythia, India, and the like, are so extremely vague in early writers, that this point cannot be regarded as of much importance. Enough, I think,

has been produced to prove, that although Sindbad's second voyage contains a large amount of exaggeration, it is by no means to be regarded as a fictitious narrative. There is a solid substratum of truth on which the extravagancies are, as it were, embroidered.

Chapter II

Sindbad—Third and Fourth Voyages

THE third voyage of Sindbad is the one which attracts the interest of the reader, more than any of the others. He tells his guests how the ship in which he was a passenger, was overtaken by a storm, and driven on an island inhabited by certain savages, about two feet high, and covered with red hair. These swim to the ship and drag it ashore. They speak, apparently, to the sailors, but the latter are unable to understand them. The little men, however, oblige them to disembark, and convey them to another island.

The existence of pigmy races, such as are here described, as well as of hairy men, will be considered in subsequent chapters. But it may be remarked in this place, that these islanders have been supposed, and with much probability, to have been a species of apes, which are known to abound in those seas. Ibn el Wardee, the Oriental traveller, writes thus, "Among the islands of the sea of China is the 'Island of Apes.' It is large, and in it are marshy forests and numerous apes. These apes have a king, to whom they submit themselves. They carry him on their shoulders, and he governeth the island, so that none oppresseth another. Those, however, who come to them in ships, they torture with biting and scratching and stoning." It is certain that apes have often been mistaken by voyagers for wild men, and their chattering for some unintelligible language,—a mistake Sindbad's companions appear to have made on the present occasion. El Kazweenee mentions "little hairy men found on the island of Sumatra,

who have a language which resembles the chirping of birds;" and Marsden was similarly told of hairy little men, called "Orang Gugu," in the interior of the above-mentioned island, who differed little, except in the possession of speech, from ourang-outangs. These could have been nothing but apes.

To proceed with Sindbad's voyage. He and his comrades journey for some distance into the interior of the country, whither the hairy men had driven them, when they come upon a large and high building, with doors of ebony, which they open. Inside they see a large apartment containing a heap of human bones, together with a number of roasting spits. This ominous conjunction not unnaturally terrifies them; and their terror is presently increased by the appearance of a frightful giant, as black as a coal, and of hideous aspect. He has in the middle of his forehead a single eye, as red and fiery as a burning coal; front teeth projecting like those of a wild boar, and long, curled nails, resembling the talons of a huge bird.

This giant proceeds to examine the party, and singling out the captain, who is the fattest of them, runs him through with a spit, roasts and eats him. On the following morning the giant goes out, securing the door behind him, and Sindbad and his companions await his return in the evening, when he makes a meal on another of the party, in the same manner as before.

Sindbad and his fellow-voyagers are now driven by desperation to devise some mode of delivering themselves from their terrible enemy. They heat their spears red-hot, and plunge them into his eye, instantly depriving him of sight. He gropes about until he finds the door, and makes his way out. They follow and would have escaped from the island, but the giant returns accompanied by several others, who fling stones after the departing voyagers, sinking all the rafts except the one in which Sindbad himself is conveyed.

Now this story is to be found in the legends of a great many nations, which in respect of language, race, and modes of thought, differ widely from one another. Every version has

something peculiar to itself; and their coincidence—considering that, beyond all possibility of question, there never has existed upon the face of the earth any race with any reasonable degree of similarity to the monsters described—is surely most remarkable.

There is, first of all, the Greek reading of the story, which is to be found in the ninth book of Homer's Odyssey. There Ulysses and his companions come to an island, presumed to be Sicily. They land, and presently come upon a vast cave surrounded on all sides by a laurel grove. There a huge

building has been erected of hewn stone, pines, and oak trees. Presently the Cyclops comes home. Perceiving the Greek voyagers, he kills two of them, and makes his meal off them. This process he repeats, day after day, taking care to shut them carefully up in the house during his absence; until Ulysses and his followers blind him, nearly after the same fashion as Sindbad is related to have followed; only that Ulysses employs a wooden pole, sharpened at one end, instead of a spear. The giant goes to ask the help of his companions, and the Greeks escape from the island in the same manner as Sindbad and his fellow-voyagers: with the difference that the giants fail to reach them with the stones they fling. There

are two additional features in the Greek story—one, that the captives escape the giant's notice, as he stands at the door, by creeping out under the stomachs of the sheep, and the other that Ulysses describes himself as having the name of "Nobody," by which stratagem he induces the other giants to depart in peace, when they come up to the assistance of their comrade.

In the "Historia Septem Sapientum," a Latin collection of the twelfth century, there is a story to this effect: "The leader of a band of robbers goes with his comrades to steal the treasures of a giant. They find the giant absent from home; but he soon returns with nine others, and catches the robbers at their work. They divide the captives among them, and the captain and nine of his comrades, fall to the share of the giant who owns the house. He boils and eats the nine men, reserving the captain for the last, because of his leanness. The giant is suffering from weak eyes, and the captain, having obtained permission to attempt his cure, seethes together sulphur, pitch, salt, and arsenic, and pours the mixture when melted, into his patient's eyes. Furious with pain, the giant lays about him with his club, hoping to kill the robber-captain, who is forced to creep up a ladder and hang all day and night from the hen-perch. When he can hold on no longer, he hides among the sheep, and manages to slip between the legs of the giant, who is guarding the door, by covering himself with the skin of a ram, and fastening horns upon his head. The giant in pretended admiration of his cleverness, gives him a gold ring, which by its magical power forces him to cry out, 'Here I am.' The giant follows the sound into the forest, running continually against the trees, but still gaining on the fugitive, who, finding he cannot disengage the ring from his finger, cuts the latter off and so escapes."

A Tartar legend describes a monster, who was the son of a nymph, his father having been an Oguzian shepherd. The child was born with a single eye in the crown of the head, and from his earliest childhood showed himself so fierce and savage, that he was banished from the house where he had

been brought up. He was visited by his mother, who put a ring on his finger, which made him invulnerable by arrows or swords. He then went and lived in a cave, and preyed on his neighbours, who could offer no resistance, as no weapon could wound him. They were obliged to make an agreement to give him for his food two men every day and five hundred sheep, together with two servants to cook his victuals. The victims were chosen by lot, and the lot fell on the sons of the man by whom the monster had been reared. The youngest son, Bissat, resolves to avenge the slaughter of his brethren. He enters the giant's cave and shoots his arrows at him. But the giant only fancies that the flies are buzzing about him. Presently the monster spies Bissat, and shuts him up in one of his leather boots, intending to make his supper off him. Bissat draws his knife and cuts a hole in the boot, by which he escapes. Then he heats the knife red-hot, waits till the giant is asleep, and plunges the blade into his eye. After this he hides himself among the sheep in the cave. The monster knows that Bissat is somewhere in the house, and sits at the door to seize him as he tries to pass out. But Bissat wraps himself in the skin of a ram, and when his enemy clutches this, he lets go of the skin and slips out. The other now attempts a stratagem. He offers Bissat a ring, which has the property of returning to its master at his desire. Bissat puts it on, and is instantly drawn towards the giant. But the ring slips off his finger and he escapes.

In the Servian myth, we have a priest and his pupil, who being overtaken by night, seek shelter in the cave of a giant, who has but one eye in the middle of his forehead. The mouth of the cave is closed by a stone, which a hundred men could not roll away. The giant roasts and eats the priest, and invites the pupil to the feast, candidly, however, informing him, that he means to kill and eat him on the following day. The lad sharpens a piece of wood, and while the giant sleeps pierces his eye with it. He escapes on the following day, by slipping out like the others, under a ram. The giant offers him a stick to drive his sheep with. But as the lad holds out

his hand for it, the stick cleaves to his finger, and he has to draw his knife and cut the finger off. He then runs off, driving before him the herds of the giant, who follows in pursuit. The lad decoys him to the brink of a lake, into which he plunges headlong and is drowned.

There are a great many other similar stories current alike among European and Eastern nations. The main features of all are pretty nearly the same. There is the huge monster, who in almost every instance has only a single eye; there is the fact of his devouring his captives; the putting out of his eye by some red-hot implement, and the escape of the prisoners by one stratagem or another. What may have been the original of them all is of course pure matter of conjecture. It may be simply an allegory, in which brute force and violence are overcome by skill and prudence. It may be some very ancient legend, such as we shall have occasion to consider in a subsequent chapter.

Sindbad and his two fellow-voyagers escape to another island, where two of them are devoured by enormous serpents, which he himself contrives to evade, and after some minor adventures returns home.

The fourth voyage begins, like the last, with a shipwreck. Sindbad and his companions are this time seized by a number of blacks, who offer them a certain herb to eat, which they find very agreeable, and devour with avidity. Sindbad suspects their motives, and refuses to partake of it. He soon finds that he had good grounds for his caution. The people of the country are cannibals, and have supplied their guests with the herb only in order to fatten them for their table; as soon, therefore, as they have reached the requisite degree of plumpness they are killed and served up to table. Sindbad is considered as not worth eating, and he is enabled to escape to a country which lies seven days' journey off, where he falls in with some persons who speak the same language as himself, and they convey him to an adjoining island.

In this instance, at all events, all that Sindbad has related is, in all likelihood, strictly true. Yakoob Ibn Ishak, an East-

ern traveller, says: "Among the islands of the Ethiopian Sea is the island of Seksan. I met with a man having many scratches on his face, and asked him respecting them, and he said, 'I went upon the sea and the wind drove me to the island of Seksan, from which we could not depart because of the violence of the wind. And there came to us a people whose faces were like the faces of dogs, and their bodies like the bodies of men. A party of them came behind us and drove us to their abodes, where we saw skulls, and legs, and arms of men. Then they took us into a house, in which was a sick man, and brought us out fruits and other food; whereupon the man said, "They feed you that you may become fat, and he among you who is fat they eat." So I ate little, that I might not become fat. Everyone of my companions who became fat they ate; until only I and that man remained, for I was lean and he was ill. And that man said to me, "A festival of theirs hath arrived, and they all go out to celebrate it, and are absent at it three days, so if thou canst make thy escape do so. But as for me, I am, as thou seest, unable to move, and cannot flee. See then to thyself." I therefore replied, "May God compensate thee in Paradise." I went forth and journeyed by night, and hid myself by day.' "

Sindbad accordingly makes his escape, and finds some persons gathering pepper, who take him home with them to their own country, where he gains the king's favour by making him a saddle—an article hitherto unknown in the country. The king proposes to him to marry and settle in the land, and is further complaisant enough to supply him with a wife, who is noble, beautiful, rich, and accomplished. Sindbad lives with her in perfect harmony, and is delighted with his good fortune. But presently he finds that matrimony is not without its drawbacks, even in that happy island. He learns with dismay that the custom of the country is, in the event of the death of either the husband or the wife, to bury the survivor in the same tomb as the deceased. He inquires, with some anxiety, whether or no strangers in the land would be liable to the operation of the same law, and is assured that his priv-

ilege as a husband would be in no degree forfeited by any consideration of the kind. Sindbad now watches his wife's health with the most tender interest; but unhappily she is taken ill, and dies in the course of a few days. He remonstrates in vain, and has to submit to the law of the country. The bride is dressed in her most magnificent clothes, and decorated with all her jewels, and then let down into a huge pit, similar apparently to those in use at Naples, only that the substratum of the quicklime is omitted. Seven loaves and a jug of water are given him to sustain life a short time. He manages, however, to prolong his existence by arming himself with a large bone, and knocking on the head several husbands and wives in succession, as they are let down alive into the pit, and possessing himself of their bread and water, until he contrives to escape. In some recent editions of the "Arabian Nights" this particular feat of Sindbad's is suppressed—whether for the sake of Sindbad's character, or for fear of shocking the reader, I am unable to say. But as they have not thought fit to omit the roasting alive of Sindbad's companions by the black giant, these editors need hardly have been so scrupulous about this particular incident, and Sindbad's character may be left to take care of itself—the more so as he evidently does not consider that the affair in question was at all a discreditable one, justifying it, I suppose, by self-preservation, the first law of nature.

I protest against the alteration of the treasured stories of one's youth without any sufficient reason.

The burial of the living husband with the wife is generally, I believe, considered to be a mere fiction. No such custom—it is affirmed by more than one writer—ever existed among any people; the nearest approach to it being the Hindoo suttee, or self-immolation of the wife on the funeral pile of her husband. But this is not the case. A similar custom is mentioned by more than one writer. Thus, in the "Adventures of Hatim-tai," the following story is told:—

"After crossing an extensive desert the traveller saw a large city before him; as he approached nearer he could hear

the sound of many voices, as of persons engaged in keen debate. On his arrival among them, he asked one of them, 'Tell me what is the cause of this uproar which I hear?' 'The daughter of our chief is dead,' replied the man, 'and they are insisting that her husband shall consent to be buried alive with her, a measure which he does not seem to relish.' 'Worthy sir,' said Hatim, 'is it your custom to bury the living with the dead? I see this unfortunate man is anything but compliant. Surely you will not cast him alive into the tomb. Have you not in your hearts the fear of God, in whose hands are life and death?'

"The chief man having heard Hatim's expostulation, said, 'Hear me, stranger, before you condemn us. This young man, who was my daughter's husband, once came into our city a traveller, like yourself. He took up his residence among us, and in course of time fell desperately in love with my daughter. The flame was mutual, so I had no objection to their union, provided he would conform to our custom, which is, that if the wife dies first, the husband should be buried alive with her. To this he agreed, and now he will not perform his solemn promise.'

"Hatim, on hearing the merits of the case, addressed the young man and said: 'Shame upon you, why do you not perform your promise? Life is at best but short, and altogether uncertain; and for this you are willing to stain your reputation.' The young man, with tears in his eyes, said, 'Generous stranger, have you, too, also ranked yourself with my enemies? Let me ask you if such a custom would be tolerated in your own country?' 'That,' said Hatim, 'is not the question at present, but whether you ought to fulfil your engagement.'

"The young man, however, will not agree, and the people of the town on the other hand insist on the burial. At last Hatim arranges the matter by promising to effect the young man's release if he will agree. Accordingly he persuades the people to allow the tomb to be made like the tombs in the young man's country, in which there is always an aperture to

let in light and air. They agree, after some debate; the young man is buried, and the mouth of the grave closed, after the eastern fashion, with a large stone.

"At night Hatim goes to release him, but finds that it is the custom for all the male relatives of the deceased to watch and pray by the grave for three days and three nights. Hatim is obliged to keep aloof all that time. On the fourth night he goes to the tomb, but the young man has fallen into a swoon of exhaustion, and Hatim has great difficulty in rousing him. He then clears away the stones and earth till he has made a passage sufficiently large to allow of the young man's exit. He gives him some money to help him on his way, and replaces the earth."

Among the Africans of the Gold Coast, also, the same custom prevails. Marchais, who was an eye-witness of the dreadful ceremony, gives the following description of it:—

"The chief of the village having died of a hard drinking-bout, the cries of his wives immediately spread the news through the village. All the women ran and howled like furies; the favourite wife distinguished herself by her grief, and not without cause. As several women in the same case had prudently thought fit to make their escape, the rest of the chief's wives took care that *she* should have no opportunity of doing so. When the marabout (priest) had examined the body, and ascertained that the death was natural, the relatives, with his assistance, washed and dried the corpse, rubbed it all over with fat, and stretched it upon a mat in the middle of the house. The relatives and the wives then sat round it, tore their hair and flesh, and yelled for two hours. After that time four lusty negroes entered the hut, and lifted the body on a barrow made of boughs, and carried it through the town, making extravagant gestures as they went. The marabout then took the favourite wife by the arm, and delivered her to some stout negroes, who, seizing her roughly, tied her hands and feet behind her. Then tossing her into the grave, and the body of her husband upon her, they filled up the hole with stones, and went home." (Marchais, p. 259.)

St. Jerome mentions a similar practice as being in existence among the Scythians: "They bury those," he says, "who are greatly beloved by the dead along with them."

Sir J. Maundeville has a like tale. "When any man dies in this country (Calanak) they burn his body; and if his wife have no child they burn her with him. And if the woman die before the husband they burn him with her, *if he will.* But if he will not, no man constraineth him thereto, but he may wed again without blame or reproof," a flagrant piece of injustice to the fair sex, which doubtless provoked the indignation of the feminists of that land.

In the Greek Church, in the event of any of the parochial clergy losing their wives, it is not the practice to consign the husband to the grave along with her; but they relegate him nevertheless to a living tomb, shutting him up in a monastery for the remainder of his life. It is commonly reported that no wives in Christendom are so carefully looked after by their husbands, as those of the Greek clergy. It is a pity we cannot import some similar practice among the wife-beaters of this country.

The escape of Sindbad from the cave, marvellous as it sounds, has nevertheless its strict parallel in history. Aristomenes, the hero of the first Messenian War on the occasion of one of his inroads into Laconia, found himself surrounded by an overwhelming force. He long kept his enemies at bay; at length he was wounded, struck down, and made prisoner, together with fifty of his companions. The Spartans had but little generosity in their composition, particularly towards one who had inflicted upon them so much loss and ignominy. The whole of the prisoners were thrown down a high rock into a pit called the Ceadas. All his companions were killed by the fall, but he came to the ground uninjured. "He saw the sky above him," writes Bishop Thirlwall, "the naked sides of the precipice that enclosed him, together with a chasm, dark as night at its foot, and he wrapped himself in his cloak to wait for death. But on the third day a sound of life caught his ear. Uncovering his face he perceived that a fox had pene-

trated into the cave, doubtless for the same reason as in the instance of Sindbad's adventure—to prey on the bodies of the dead. Motionless Aristomenes awaited its approach, caught hold of its tail, and, guided by it, as it struggled to escape, crept on till he saw a glimpse of light in the bowels of the rock, enlarged the opening with his hands, and the next day was again in Eira." (Thirlwall, Vol. I. p. 415.)

Sindbad having escaped from the cave, returns thither, collects the diamonds, rubies, and other articles of value which had been interred with innumerable corpses, ties them up as bales of merchandise, and waits on the sea-shore till a ship passes, which conveys him home. Here he bestows a great deal of money in almsgiving and the support of the mosques—possibly in atonement for the deaths of the good people whom he had so summarily disposed of in the cave; though that trifling matter, as has been before remarked, does not appear to have weighed on his conscience.

Chapter III

Sindbad—Fifth, Sixth and Seventh Voyages

SINDBAD's three remaining voyages do not contain as many striking incidents as the four earlier ones. The fifth again introduces the roc and the roc's egg. Sindbad fits out a ship of his own, and takes some other merchants as passengers. They land upon an island, and there discover a prodigious egg, which Sindbad's experience in the course of his second voyage enables him to recognise. He advises his fellow-travellers not to meddle with it, but they disregard him, break the egg with hatchets, and kill and roast the young roc.

Presently the parent birds appear, and the merchants embark on shipboard and sail off to avoid them. But the rocs no sooner discover the slaughter of their young, than they fly off, and return with two enormous masses of rock in their claws. The first of these the pilot contrives to avoid by a skilful movement of the rudder. The second completely crushes the vessel. The passengers are all immersed in the sea, and Sindbad alone escapes with his life.

He floats awhile on a fragment of the wreck, until he is thrown up on an island, where he lands, and finds it overspread with rich verdure, and trees bearing delicious fruit. He lies down to sleep on the banks of a rivulet, and on the following day advances further into the country. Presently he meets with what seems to be an old man, who (as he conjectures) has been shipwrecked like himself. Observing that he appeared extremely feeble, Sindbad offers to help him, and

the old man signifies by signs that he wants to be lifted up, and carried across the stream, in order to gather fruit.

Sindbad unwarily complies with his wish, and takes his newly found companion on his shoulders. But he soon finds that it was an easier matter to take the burden up than to lay it down again. The old man sticks firmly to Sindbad's back, twisting his legs (which are found to be covered with a skin like a cow's) so tight round his neck as almost to strangle him. All our traveller's efforts to release himself are vain. The old man clings to him day and night, compelling him by repeated kicks to go wherever he wants to be carried.

This goes on for a long time, until one day Sindbad finds some grapes, the juice of which he squeezes into a large gourd, and leaves it to ferment. Not long afterwards he again passes that way and finds the juice converted into wine, which he drinks with much satisfaction. His tormentor, observing this, desires Sindbad to hand him the gourd, and drinks off all the remainder of its contents. This is sufficient to intoxicate him, and our adventurer avails himself of the opportunity to shake off the incubus, and then catching up a large stone, shatters his head to pieces with it.

The "old man of the sea," as he is called, is generally supposed to have been a large ourang-outang, of which there are great numbers in Sumatra and the neighbouring islands. An Arabic traveller describes one of these as "an old Jewish-looking man, whose face is like the face of a white bearded man, with a body like that of a frog, and bristles as stiff as those of an ox." Another, very similar to this, he describes under the name of an "old man of the sea." The ourang-outang is said by some writers to seize its prey after the manner described by Sindbad, viz., clutching the victim round the throat with its hind legs. Popular belief attributes the same mode of operation to the gorilla of Equatorial Africa; but (as we shall see presently) the best authorities deny that the gorilla does do this.

The "old man of the sea," as here depicted by Sindbad, has become a favourite metaphor in the portraiture of that most

terrible infliction of modern society—a bore. Once let this dire enemy fasten on you, and make you the hearer of his favourite topics, and he is as difficult to get rid of as Sindbad's "old man." Nor is it, unhappily, possible to crush *his* head with a heavy stone, as our voyager succeeded in doing in the instance of his tormentor.

Viewed from another point, the story has been beautifully allegorised by Mr. Paget, in his "Hope of the Katzekopfs." He there represents "Selbst" (or Self) as being our "old man," whom Human Nature is induced, as it were, to take up on its shoulders, and allow itself to be guided by, on one or two occasions. It is soon found to be difficult, and at last almost impossible, to shake him off. "Self" continues to grow and grow in size, until what was hardly felt at first becomes an intolerable burden.

Sindbad, having escaped from his tyrant, joins some merchants whom he finds gathering cocoanuts; which they procure after the fashion so often described in story books. The reader will probably have heard the tale of the travelling pedlar and his nightcaps: how, when passing through a forest, he lies down to sleep, and in the morning awakes to find his pack empty, and the trees above him crowded with monkeys, each with a nightcap on his head. Despairing of regaining his property, he plucks off his own nightcap and throws it to them, telling them they may as well have that as they have all the others. The monkeys all imitate the same action, each flinging his nightcap back at the pedlar, who thus regains his property.

Sindbad returns home, and after a while sets out on his sixth voyage. This also begins with a shipwreck. The ship comes within the vortex of a current, which dashing it against a high, precipitous rock, shatters it to pieces.

Here may be noticed also that singular notion, to be found in another of the voyages of the "Arabian Nights," viz., the Loadstone Rock, which draws all the ironwork out of any ship that approaches within a certain distance of it. The ship, of course, goes to pieces and the crew are lost. This occurs

in the voyage in the third calendar. He reports how a sailor one day announces to the captain that he has discovered from the masthead a great black mass of some kind. The pilot, on hearing this intelligence, breaks out into lamentations. He says that the black mass is an enormous loadstone, which draws all ships near it, by reason of the bolts and nails with which they are fastened together. As the vessels approach nearer, the attraction of the loadstone becomes so great that all the nails are drawn out and fly to the mountain. "The next

day," he proceeds, "we distinctly perceived the black mountain, and presently, what the pilot had foretold, happened. We saw the nails and every other piece of iron belonging to the vessel fly towards the mountain, against which they struck with a horible noise. The vessel then went to the bottom."

Extravagant as this may sound, there is plenty of independent testimony to it. El Kazweenee writes: "The mine of loadstone is on the shore of the Indian Ocean; and if the ships which navigate that sea approach the said mine, and contain anything of iron, it flies from them like a bird and adheres to the mountain. For which reason it is customary to use no iron in the construction of vessels employed in this navigation."

Aloysius says—"Some ships are framed entirely of wood,

because men fear the force of the loadstone, which is to be found in the above-mentioned island."

Serapion, to whose credibility Sir Thomas Brown bears witness, tells us that "a mine of this stone (the loadstone) is in the seacoast of India, whereto when ships approach, there is no iron in them which flies not, like a bird, unto those mountains; and therefore their ships are fastened not with iron, but wood, for otherwise they would be torn to pieces."

Hans Egede relates that "Frederick the Second succeeded his royal father, as well in the government as in his good designs about Greenland. On which errand he sent Mogens Heinson, a renowned seaman in those days. This adventurer, after he had gone through many difficulties and dangers of storm and ice, got sight of the land, but could not approach it. Whereupon he returned home again, and pretended that he might have got ashore if his ship had not been stopped in the midst of its course by some loadstone rocks, hidden in the sea, so that he could not proceed. But the true loadstone rock, in my opinion," adds Hans, quaintly, "was the terrible fright he was in of the ice-mountains and the strong currents."

Lastly—Sir John Maundeville informs us that, "in the isle of Cines, or Ormuz, are ships without nails of iron, or bonds, on account of the loadstone." And again, "in many places in the sea are great rocks of the stone of the adamant, that of its proper nature draweth iron to it. And therefore pass no ships that have nails or bonds of iron within them; and if there do, anon the rocks of the adamant draw them to them, so that they may never go there. I myself have seen it afar off in that sea, as though it had been a great island, full of trees and bushes, full of thorns and briers in great plenty. And the shipmen told us that all that growth of wood was of ships that were drawn thither by the adamant, for the iron that was in them. And out of the rottenness and other things that were within the ships grew such bushes, and thorns, and briers, and green grass."

Sindbad escapes the wreck, and lands along with his fellow-

voyagers on a long and narrow island, one side of which consisted of an inaccessible rock. They divide such provisions as they have between them; but these are presently exhausted, until they all die of hunger except Sindbad. He had husbanded his provisions more carefully, and had concealed some portion of them. Nevertheless, when he had buried the last of his shipmates, he had so little left that it was plain that he, too, must soon succumb to starvation.

One day, however, he chances to take note of a river which ran for some distance and then disappeared into a hollow gorge of the mountain. It occurs to him that there might possibly be a way through the mountain, and the subterranean river might convey him to the country that lay on the other side. Even if this should not prove to be the case, he could only be drowned; and if he stayed where he was he should be starved, which was worse. He, therefore, collects a number of spars and ropes from the wreck, of which there is plenty, and makes a raft, which he loads, as was his wont on other occasions, with the jewels and other valuables which had been thrown upon the shore with the wrecks of numberless ships. Then he pushes it off into the stream and is soon carried into the rocky hollow. The roof of the vault is so low that he has sometimes to stoop for fear of striking his head against it. It soon becomes so dark that he cannot see whither he is going. After two or three days, all his provisions are consumed, and he falls asleep.

How long he lies thus he does not know, but when he awakes, he finds himself in an open country, on the banks of a river, to which his raft has been fastened, and a large concourse of negroes is collected round him. The blacks express a good deal of curiosity as to how and whence he had come to their country. He tells his story and asks for food, which they give him. Soon afterwards they convey him to the city of Serendib, which is the capital of Ceylon, and present him to their king, who receives him kindly.

The king of Serendib, indeed, is so greatly interested by the

recital of his adventures that he orders them to be written in letters of gold, and preserved in the archives of his kingdom.

Sindbad describes the great state maintained by this monarch, how when he went abroad, he sat on a throne on the back of an elephant, while a pillar of gold surmounted by an emerald six inches long and an inch thick, is carried behind him. He is preceded by a guard of a thousand men habited in silk and gold, and all mounted on elephants richly caparisoned.

Sindbad, after a while, requests permission to return home, which the king gives, and not only bestows large gifts upon him, but charges him with a letter for the Caliph Haroun-al-Raschid, together with some valuable presents. These are sometimes objected to as being of a size and value which exceed all belief. They consist of a vase made of a single ruby, and worked into a cup six inches high and an inch thick, filled with fine round pearls, weighing half a drachm each: also of a skin of a serpent, with scales as large as a crown piece. Its peculiar property is to preserve all those who lie upon it from all disease.

But other writers describe, in almost the same language, the jewels of those countries. In the stories of Hatim-tai, already quoted, a traveller is sent by Husn Banu, queen of Shahabad, to procure a pearl, equal in size to the one she shows him, which is as large as a duck's egg. This, after many adventures and troubles, he succeeds in obtaining.

In the voyages of Magellan, he affirms that, "They find pearls as big as doves' eggs, and sometimes as hens' eggs: which, however, they can only fish out of very deep water. They persistently affirm that the islanders told them how the king of the country had in his crown two pearls as big as a goose's egg."

Cardinal Lodovic again, speaks of pearls, found in the West Indian islands, as big as hazel nuts. We are told by other writers of a ruby being made into a cup. Sir John Maundeville, who is seldom wanting to himself in matters like these, declares that "in the island of Nacumara, the king

beareth about his neck a ruby orient, noble and fine, that is a foot in length, and five fingers large!"

The old superstition, too, about the skin of a serpent curing diseases, is referred to in the third volume of Elliott's "Asiatic Sketches." "The skin of the snake, called Burrawar," he says, "is esteemed a cure for external pains, when applied to the part affected." 1375491

Sindbad conveys the king of Serendib's gifts to the caliph, who requires him, much against his will, to make one more voyage, in order to carry back his presents, in return for those bestowed upon him. Sindbad is again well received by the king of Serendib, who presently dismisses him to return home, but our voyager is once more unfortunate. He has hardly set sail, when he is attacked by corsairs, who make him captive, and sell him to a merchant, who, it is to be presumed, lives in some other town of the same island (Ceylon), though Sindbad calls it "a large island at a very great distance." The merchant asks him if he can shoot with a bow and arrow. Finding that he is a proficient in that art, he takes him into the forest and places him in the branches of a large tree, desiring him to shoot any elephants that pass that way. Sindbad shoots several elephants. But one day the herds surround the tree where he is located, tear it up by the roots, and convey him, half dead with terror, to a lonely spot, and leave him there. After they are gone, he ventures to look about him, and perceives that he is lying upon a small elevated piece of ground, which is completely covered with the bones and teeth of elephants. He divines that it is the common burial-place of the herd, and that the animals have conveyed him thither in order that he might satisfy his requirements by taking the spoils of the dead, and cease to persecute the living.

Once more I imagine most readers regard this story also as a mere fable. But if they do so, once more they are mistaken. "The natives of Ceylon," says that eminent authority, Sir Emerson Tennent, "declare that the survivors of a herd of elephants are in the habit of burying such of their companions as die a natural death." It is curious that this belief was

current also among the Greeks of the lower Empire, and Phile, writing early in the fourteenth century, not only describes the younger elephants as tending the wounded, but as burying the dead.

The same is affirmed by Pliny in the third chapter of the eighth book of his "Natural History." "The elephants," he says, "know that men hunt after their tusks and teeth as a spoil they desire; wherefore those who have succumbed to any accident, or old age, they bury in the ground:" and the editor suggests in a note, that their reason for doing this is the grudge that they bear to men, who hunt them down to their injury. "They are unwilling that men should obtain what they want, even though the spoil be taken from the dead."

Mr. Morris reports, that when he was chief officer of the district near Putlam, he once oganised a corral there. It was constructed across one of the paths to which the elephants resorted in their frequent marches. During the course of the proceedings two of the captured elephants died. Their carcases of course were left within the enclosure, which was abandoned as soon as the capture was complete. The wild elephants resumed their path through it, and a few days afterwards the headman reported to Mr. Morris that the bodies had been "removed, and carried outside the corral to a spot whither none but the elephants could have borne them."

"Among the Singhalese," writes Tennent, "the ancient fable of the elephant attaining to the age of two or three hundred years still prevails; and it is probably in consequence of this popular belief, that the natives generally assert that the body of a dead elephant is seldom or never to be discovered in the woods. And certain it is that frequenters of the forest with whom I have conversed, whether European or Singhalese, are consistent in their assurances that they have never found the remains of an elephant that had died a natural death. A European gentleman, who for thirty-six years without intermission had been living in the jungle—one, too, who had made the habits of the wild elephant a subject of constant observation and study—has often expressed to me his aston-

ishment, that after seeing many thousand living elephants in all possible situations, he had never yet found a single skeleton of a dead one, except such as had fallen by his rifle."

But Sindbad, it will be seen, does not confine his assertion to the mere sepulture of a dead elephant by his companions. He affirms that there exists a regular place of interment for the whole species. With reference to this, Sir Emerson Tennent has a further remark. "The Singhalese," he says, "have a superstition respecting the close of life in an elephant. They believe that on feeling the approach of dissolution, it repairs to a solitary valley and there resigns itself to death. A native who accompanied Mr. Cripps when hunting in the forests of Anarajapoora, intimated to him that he was then in the immediate vicinity of the spot to which the elephants come to die; but that it was so mysteriously concealed, that though everyone believed in its existence, no one had ever succeeded in penetrating to it. One of the Kandyan chiefs assured me it was the universal belief of his countrymen, that the elephant, when about to die, resorted to a valley in Saffragam, among the mountains to the east of Adam's Peak, which was reached by a narrow pass, with walls of rock on either side; and there, by the side of a lake of clear water, they took their last repose. It was not without interest that I afterwards recognised this tradition in the story of Sindbad the Sailor, who in his seventh voyage, after conveying the presents of Haroun-al-Raschid to the king of Serendib, is wrecked on his return from Ceylon, and sold to a master who employs him in shooting elephants for the sake of their ivory; till one day, the tree on which he was stationed having been uprooted by one of the herd, he fell senseless to the ground and the great elephant approaching, wound his trunk round him and carried him away, ceasing not to proceed until he had taken him to a place where, his terror having subsided, he found himself among the bones of elephants, and knew this was their burial-place."

It may be mentioned that, if naturalists are to be trusted, the elephant is not the only creature that seeks out a remote

and lonely spot in which to die, when they feel their last hour to be at hand. Mr. Darwin says that in South America the llamas appear to have favourite spots in which to lie down when death is felt to be near at hand. "On the banks of the Santa Cruz river," he writes, "in certain circumscribed places, which were generally bushy, and all near the water, the ground was actually white with their bones. On one such spot I counted between ten and twenty heads." (Voy. of Nat., ch. 8.) Mr. Darwin has the same remark with reference to other animals. At St. Jago, one of the Cape de Verde Islands, he saw a retired corner similarly covered with the bones of goats. "It appeared," he says, "to be the burial-ground of all the goats in the island."

Sindbad returns to his employer's house and informs him of the strange adventure with the elephants, which the reader has just heard, and the enormous wealth which it had disclosed. In gratitude for the discovery he is immediately set at liberty, and sent back to Bagdad with a ship full of ivory, one-half of which is to be his own property. He now resolves to make no further voyages, but to remain in peace at home, enjoying the fruits of the toils and dangers he has undergone.

So end the voyages of Sindbad. It is plain enough that the narrative is more or less a work of fiction. Not only are some of the incidents too improbable to be credited, but others —as for example, the one-eyed giant and the roc's egg—are obviously either mere inventions or mystical traditions belonging to a very early period. Again, Sindbad could not have lived in the days of both King Mihragé and the Caliph Haroun-al-Raschid; these two monarchs belonging to two different epochs in history. The likelihood is that Sindbad is the name of a real traveller in very early times, which had been handed down from generation to generation, until in the ninth century—which though one of almost unredeemed ignorance in Europe, was an era of enlightenment and polish in the East—some one committed to writing the popular legends current respecting him; the name of the Caliph Haroun being

introduced as a mark of respect to the reigning sovereign. This would account alike for the solid substratum of truth which "The Voyages" contain, as well as for the wholly incredible additions which one generation after another had made to the original narrative.

Chapter IV

Ulysses—The Egyptians—Hanno—Sataspes—Eudoxus

WITH the exception of the Hebrew Patriarchs, the earliest traveller of whom we have any record is Ulysses, the king of the Ionian island, Ithaca. Others undertook expeditions to foreign lands for military and other purposes, such as Theseus and Jason; but these cannot properly be called travellers.

It is needless to add that Ulysses's individuality has been denied by modern criticism. He is supposed to be, like Sindbad, a mere *nom de plume,* to hold together, as it were, a number of legendary tales respecting foreign lands, which were in circulation in the earlier ages of Greece. It is doubted whether any person whatsoever ever made the voyages described, nay, whether the countries he is reported to have visited had any existence. Even this amount of demolition does not satisfy the critics of our day. It is not only doubted whether there ever was such a person as Ulysses, but whether there was ever such a person as Homer. "The blind old man of Scio's rocky isle" is consigned to the shadowy land of myth and legend. The metrical stories current among the Ionic Greeks respecting the carrying off of Helen, and the deeds of the Hellenic warriors who avenged the wrong done to Menelaus, their wanderings and mishaps, were (it is contended) collected together and arranged as though they had been parts of one continuous poem, presumed to be the work of an ancient wandering minstrel called Homer; but who, in all likelihood, never existed at all. And this, notwithstand-

ing that Homer's own countrymen, however widely they may have differed as to his exact date, never had any doubt as to his individuality. This is not the place for the discussion of a question like this. But I cannot forbear from deploring the destruction of one fact of history after another, until nothing is left us apparently but universal unbelief. There were never any such persons as Hengist and Horsa; Alfred did not burn the cakes, nor Queen Eleanor thread the labyrinth and offer Fair Rosamond the choice of the bowl and dagger; Prince Hal did not box Judge Gascoigne's ears, and Richard III.'s back was as straight as those of other men; William Tell did not hit the apple on his son's head; and the dog Gelert did not kill the snake, and was not slain by his misguided master! At this rate what will be left to us, or rather to our children, to believe? Archbishop Whately in his "Historic Doubts Respecting Napoleon Buonaparte," dealt this school of criticism a heavy blow, under which it staggered awhile; but to all appearance it has fully recovered from it, and is as vigorous as ever.

For the argument's sake, we will assume that Ulysses, or Odysseus, as the Greeks called him, is a real person; as, to use no other argument, the consistency of the character attributed to him throughout the poem called by his name, fully justifies us in doing. He was the son of Laërtes and king of Ithaca (a small island near Cephallenia), and one of the Greek kings who took part in the siege of Troy. After the fall of that city he set out on his return home, but experienced a series of disasters, which prevented him from reaching home for ten years, and cost him the lives of all his companions. We will sketch out his wanderings.

He is first thrown by a tempest on the coast of Thrace, where he storms and pillages a town belonging to the Ciconians; but is obliged to depart in haste with the loss of 72 of his men.

From Thrace he is driven to the African coast, where he falls in with the Lotophagi, or lotus-eaters. Those who feed on this plant are said to lose all desire of returning to their

homes, their sole wish being to remain and partake of the delicious fruit. The lotus will be a subject of inquiry in a subsequent chapter. But it may be observed here, that the plant in question certainly exists, though its effects may have been exaggerated, and its locality is not far distant from the place assigned to it by Ulysses. The latter obliges his men to re-enter their ships, and sail away to an island of Goats, where he leaves all but one vessel, in which he proceeds to explore the island of Trinacria, or Sicily. Here the adventure with the Cyclops takes place, which has already been considered in the third voyage of Sindbad.

He rejoins his companions at the Goat island, and they sail on till they reach the island of Æolus, which some have identified with Lipari. Here the King of the Winds presents him with a bag, in which are enclosed the winds; which are to be allowed to escape only in a slight degree, so as to waft him gently homeward. But just as they are in sight of Ithaca, sleep overpowers him; and his companions, who imagine that Æolus's bag contains rich treasure, take the opportunity of bursting it open. The winds rush out in a tempest, which drives the ship back to the island of Æolus. But the King of the Winds refuses to help Ulysses a second time, and expels him ignominiously from the island. This adventure in all likelihood represents, under an allegory, a real occurrence. Æolus is believed to have been the inventor of sails, and to have bestowed some of these on Ulysses, but advised him not to set more canvas than the ship would bear, in a strong wind. In their impatience to reach the shore, the sailors hoist them all, and disaster ensues.

From Lipari Ulysses proceeds to the country of the Læstrygoni, a gigantic race of cannibals, from whom he escapes with the loss of all his ships but one. According to Strabo and Pliny, this people dwelt near Leontium, in Sicily; according to an old Roman tradition, at Formiæ, on the Italian coast. Ulysses is now carried to an island lying off the western coast of Italy, which he calls Ææa; and which is the abode of Circe, an enchantress, who beguiles all our adven-

turer's companions excepting one, with the dainties she offers them, and then turns them into swine. Ulysses himself receives from Mercury a herb called moly, which enables him to resist the force of her enchantments, and compel her to restore his followers to their proper shape. Here the allegory is too obvious to require exposition.

From the island of Circe Ulysses proceeds onward to the country of the Cimmerians, which is at the very end of the ocean wrapped in perpetual gloom. Here he descends into the Infernal Regions and receives the information he desires from Tiresias; who promises him a safe return to Ithaca, if he and his comrades are careful not to injure the cattle belonging to the Sun, when they land in Sicily. Ulysses returns to the isle of Circe, who dismisses him with some further instructions and with a favourable wind. Some scholars have identified the promontory of Circæi, once apparently insulated, as Circe's island, and fixed the localities of Cimmeria, the Styx and Avernus. But the imagination enters largely into their geographical arrangements.

Ulysses proceeds on his voyage, and sails past the island of the Sirens; which is, according to some, the modern Capreæ, and according to others an islet off Cape Pelorus. The Sirens are monsters with the faces and bosoms of beautiful women, having their lower extremities unsightly and misshapen. They are endowed with wonderful sweetness of voice, which so entrances mariners who pass near their place of abode, that they ever stop the course of their vessels, and continue to listen to the sweet strains until they die of hunger. If any one, however, could succeed in breaking the spell thus laid on him, and continue his voyage unmoved, the enchantresses themselves would perish.

Ulysses knows of the danger, and secures himself against it by obliging every one on board, excepting himself, to close their ears with wax. He orders the crew to bind himself to the ship's mast, so that, however anxious he might be to remain and listen to the magic strain, it would be impossible for him to do so. Presently the ship approaches the isle, and

the Sirens raise their song. Ulysses is completely overpowered by its unearthly sweetness, and makes frantic efforts to burst the fetters that bind him. But they are too strong for him, and he is gradually carried away beyond their influence. Here again no one can misapprehend the allegory. As in Circe's island, gross sensual pleasure enslaved the crew, so here the more refined allurements of the senses overpower humanity. The only hope of escape lies in either closing the ears to them, or fettering the spirit by bonds of discipline.

The vessel now enters the strait that lies between Sicily and Italy, and makes the dangerous passage between Scylla and Charybdis. Scylla is described as a fearful monster, barking like a dog, with twelve feet, six long necks and mouths, each of which contains three rows of sharp teeth. She dwells on a rock projecting from the southernmost point of Italy, where the Sicilian coast approaches it within a very short distance, and bites off the head of any unlucky navigator who ventures within her reach. Those who are sailing by would, of course, endeavour to hug the opposite shore as much as possible. But on that side too a danger almost as great threatens them. There is to be seen an immense fig-tree under which there dwells another monster, named Charybdis, who thrice every day swallows down the waters of the sea and thrice every day throws them up again. As Ulysses's vessel passes this dangerous spot, the monster Scylla thrusts out her heads, and seizes upon six of his companions. Ulysses sees them drawn up the rocks as little fishes are drawn up by a hook, while they vainly cry for help.

Here again we have a true narrative of adventure wrapped up in, and embellished with, poetical imagery. The dreaded strait of Scylla and Charybdis was well known to the Greeks. The long necks and the mouth and the teeth represent the dangerous currents, the hollows in the rock, and the jagged crags against which voyagers were liable to be dashed. So too the swallowing up of the sea by the other monster, and the belching it forth again, are a metaphorical description of a whirlpool of unusual size and force. The headland of Scylla

consists, in simple prose, of a projecting rock 200 feet in height, deeply hollowed at the base by the continual action of the waves. Doubtless in times when vessels were small in size, and sailors inexperienced in their management, the passage was one full of peril. Possibly also the current may have forced for itself a wider and smoother channel in the lapse of ages. But the strait of the present day presents little difficulty to vessels, unless when the weather is unusually stormy.

Ulysses and his followers now land in Sicily and see grazing

near them the oxen of the Sun, with which they had been specially warned, on peril of their lives, not to meddle. The reader will not need to be told that they *do* meddle with them, killing several of them. In consequence of this sacrilege they are visited by another storm, and are all drowned except Ulysses, who escapes to the island of Calypso (believed to be Pantellaria or Gozo). The goddess offers him immortality and her hand in marriage, and though he will not consent, detains him for seven years. At the end of this time she is commanded by Jupiter to let him depart. He is conveyed on a raft to Scheria, the island of the Phæacians (Corfu), and thence to Ithaca, where he regains his wife and kingdom.

To draw the line between fact and fable in the wanderings of Ulysses would be a hopeless attempt. Let critics say what they will, the probability is that there really was such a person as Ulysses; that on his return from Troy he was driven about the seas lying round the coasts of Sicily and Italy; that on his return home he related the particulars of his wanderings, and that these were diffused over Greece; and lastly, that the story was worked up with additions and embellishments in the Homeric poem. Whatever difficulties there may be in the way of accepting this, there are still greater difficulties in accepting anything else. It would seem that Homer's knowledge of geography, derived probably in the main from Phœnician sources, was tolerably correct, until his hero passes to the westward of Sicily and Italy, when it becomes altogether wild and mythical.

The next travellers after Ulysses, of whom we have any authentic record, are the crews of the Egyptian vessels sent out by Pharaoh Necho, King of Egypt, to circumnavigate Africa, A.D. 620, or so. It is the fashion with modern geographers to regard this voyage as a mere fable, or at all events as so palpably improbable that nothing but the blindest credulity could have induced any one to accept it. The narrative of Herodotus, who first records it, is very brief. He says that after Necos (Pharaoh-Necho of Scripture) had desisted from digging his canal between the Nile and the Red Sea, he despatched some ships, under the guidance of certain Phœnician mariners, with orders to sail southwards, continuing their voyage until they passed through the pillars of Hercules, and so returned to Egypt. Thereupon the Phœnicians, setting sail from the Red Sea, proceeded downwards through the Southern Indian ocean. When autumn arrived, they went ashore, drew up their ships, sowed some corn which they had brought with them, and waited till it grew up. They then reaped the harvest, and threshed out the corn, which they took on board their ships and set sail again. In this manner two years were passed. Herodotus does not say that they landed a second time, and again sowed and gathered in the corn, and it must

remain uncertain whether they did so or not. Towards the beginning of the third year they reached the pillars of Hercules, and entering the Mediterranean coasted the Northern shore of Africa till they arrived at Egypt. Herodotus does not seem to doubt the fact of their having accomplished the voyage, but says he cannot believe what the Egyptian sailors reported, viz., that "during a great part of the time they had the sun on their right hand."

More modern geographers, it has already been said, as a rule, reject this voyage as a "Travellers' Tale." But some of the most eminent (as, for instance, Major Rennell) after careful examination of all the details are persuaded that it really took place. As regards the circumstance of the astonishment of the sailors at finding the sun on their right hand when they had passed the equator—it is argued that this fact could not have been unknown to the more enterprising Phœnician mariners of that day, as some of them must have sailed to the southward of Zanzibar and Cape Lôpes, and so must have been familiar with the phenomenon in question. But there is no record of any such voyage, for Hanno, of whom we shall hear presently, did not proceed so far south as Cape Lôpes; and as for saying that they *must* have been acquainted with the position of the sun to the south of the line, it is clear that they were *not,* for they reported the story to Herodotus, one hundred and fifty years afterwards, as a marvel.

Any one who carefully examines the details of the narrative will, I think, come to Rennell's conclusion. The mariners of that day knew that the coast of Africa trended almost due southward, both on the western and the eastern side; and believing as they did that the ocean ran round the whole world, could come to no other conclusion than that somewhere or other the Atlantic and Indian oceans flowed into one another. By following the line of the African coast, then they would discover this junction, and this was what the enterprising Necos desired to effect. It is probable that he had no idea that the southernmost point, the Cape of Good Hope, was so far distant. If he had guessed this, his ships would have been

much more largely provisioned, and the delay of some months, while the harvest was sown and reaped, would not have occurred.

It has been urged again, that when the crews found the voyage so much longer than they had anticipated, they would have been afraid of proceeding further, and so returned home. Those who reason thus do not take into consideration the arbitrary temper of the sovereigns of those times. Had they returned, and been able to assign no better reason for so doing than their alarm at the length of the voyage, it is probable that the whole of them would straightway have been put to death. The history of Sataspes, of which we shall speak presently, illustrates this.

If the particulars of the story are sifted and illustrated by the geography of the African shores, the two will be found to suit well enough. The Phœnicians, who, beyond question, knew the Red Sea to the south of the straits of Babel Mandeb, would be pretty sure to choose the late autumn as the season for setting sail. They would then be sure of a favourable wind as far as the tropic of Capricorn. After that, they would fall in with a strong current almost the whole way to the Cape of Good Hope. Major Rennell thinks they would reach Sofala towards the end of January—the height, that is to say, of the summer in those regions—and the Cape itself in their autumn, or the South African spring. There then they would stop to sow and reap their harvest, resuming their voyage in (their) December or January. After the Cape was passed, the navigation would become more difficult, and they might be fully nine months coasting the western shore of Africa to the Bight of Biafra. Nearly the same time would be consumed in following the coast line to Cape Palmas and round Capes Verde, Blanco, and Bojador, to the Straits of Gibraltar. Even if they did not land for the second time, it might well be past the commencement of the third year, before they entered the Mediterranean.

It is again asked, by those who question the truth of the narrative, how it was that so important a discovery, if really

made, was not followed up? It may be answered, that as it is clear that the *idea* of the possibility of circumnavigating Africa was entertained in those times, it would be equally difficult to account for that not having been put to the test. But the probabilities are that Necos was dead before the return of the ships; and none of the Egyptian kings who succeeded him possessed his spirit of enterprise. The wars and disasters of the ensuing reigns would also distract attention from maritime affairs; and, once more, we shall see presently that the notion of making a voyage round Africa was not overlooked, for subsequent attempts were made to effect it.

The next "traveller" we have to deal with is Hanno, the Carthaginian, the narrative of whose voyage along the western coast of Africa for a considerable distance southward still exists. It was composed originally in the Punic language, but was translated into Greek; and though the original has perished, we have still the copy. It is noticed by many old writers, but none of these give us information which would enable us to determine either Hanno's precise date, or the other particulars of his history. Pliny says that the expedition was undertaken "when Carthage was at the height of its prosperity." Vague as this intimation is, it is almost our only guide; for as regards the name of the leader, Hanno, there were too many distinguished Carthaginians so called to enable us to fix the date by that. Now Carthage was founded in the ninth century before Christ, and it received its first great check at the battle of Himera, B.C. 480. Up to that time it had enjoyed a career of uninterrupted success. It is reasonable, therefore, to place Hanno's voyage a generation or so previously to the Sicilian defeat; and with this the received date, 540 B.C., accords well enough.

It is certainly strange that Herodotus should never have heard of this voyage; but it may be considered as certain that he had not, for otherwise he would most surely have made some mention of it when relating the story of circumnavigation of Africa, which we have just had under consideration. By some of the ancient writers who mention it, Hanno is styled

"King of Carthage;" but by others, better informed, as Arrian, Pliny, and Mela, he is called simply "Hanno, the Carthaginian;" and the opening paragraph of the Periplus (as the journal of the voyage is called) does not give the idea of his having been sovereign of Carthage; if, indeed, at that period they had rulers who might be so styled.

The "Periplus" states that it had seemed good to the Carthaginians that Hanno should sail beyond the pillars of Hercules—Gibraltar, that is to say—and found cities for the Carthaginians. He sailed, accordingly, taking with him what seems an enormous equipment for such early times—"sixty-seven quinqueremes, together with a multitude of women and children; a sufficient supply of provisions, and other necessaries." Putting to sea, he passed the pillars of Hercules, and went two days' voyage beyond them. Here he built his first city, Thymisterium, probably on the banks of the river Marmora.

Proceeding to the westward and southward, he comes to a thickly wooded promontory called Soloeis, where he builds a Temple of Neptune. This is identified with Cape Cantin. Thence journeying southward he comes presently to what he calls Ethiopia (the tract bordering on the great Sahara), "an inhospitable people," he says, "inhabiting a land of wild beasts. Here are men of strange shape, called Troglodytes, who are said to outstrip the horse in speed."

Still proceeding southward, he colonizes a small island called Cernè (Arguin, near Cape Blanco), and reaches a river full of crocodiles and hippopotamuses (the Senegal). From thence, after fourteen days' more voyaging, he comes to a vast opening in the coast, where fires were seen continually issuing from the earth. This was doubtless the great bay into which the Gambia discharges itself; and the "fires continually issuing from the earth," are the burnings of vast prairies of dried grass, which continually take place in that country. Mungo Park, who travelled in those regions, gives a description of them which exactly tallies with that of Hanno. "The burning of the grass," he writes, "exhibits a scene of

terrific grandeur. In the middle of the night I could see the plains and mountains, as far as the eye could reach, variegated with lines of fire, and the light reflected on the sky made the heavens appear in a blaze."

Passing the fiery country, the Carthaginians proceed, and on the third day arrive at another bay, which they called the Southern Horn, supposed to be what is now called Sierra Leone. At the further end of this opening is a large island (identified by some with "Plantain Island,") lying about forty miles beyond the "Horn." It is here that Hanno encountered the "hairy men," about which there has been so much dispute.

"In this island," he says, "there was a lake, and in this lake another island full of wild men. By far the greater number were women with rough hairy bodies, whom the interpreter called Gorillas. When we pursued them, we could not catch any of the men, who all escaped our hands, being climbers of precipices, and defending themselves with stones. But we captured three women, who bit and scratched those that led them, and would not follow. So we killed and flayed them, and took their skins to Carthage, for we sailed no further, our provisions running short."

The veracity of this sensational narrative, often derided as mere fable, with its tales of fiery torrents, and tall mountains of flame, and hairy men and women, has been completely vindicated by modern travellers. It is, of course, obvious that the creatures believed by the adventurers to be wild men, were, in reality, apes; and general opinion has identified them with the recently discovered monsters of the Gaboon country, to which in consequence the name of Gorillas has been given. But Du Chaillu, the best authority on the subject, believes this to have been a mistake. The gorilla, he thinks, is too fierce and strong a creature to have been captured by the Carthaginians, as described. Again, it would be contrary to the habits of the animal to fly, and leave the females behind—their practice being for the male gorillas to advance to the attack, and cover the retreat of the females. Nor

could any great number of gorillas have subsisted in such a spot as Hanno has described. The enormous quantity of vegetable food which they consume would soon have exhausted the supply that any island to be found in that region could have contained. Hanno's wild men, he thinks, were either pongos or chimpanzees. The females belonging to either of these species might have been captured and carried off, though it would have been no easy matter to overpower them.

Subsequently to Hanno's time, a certain Sataspes, who had been condemned to death by King Xerxes, was reprieved on condition of making a voyage through the pillars of Hercules, and following the African coast until he emerged at the Red Sea—the reverse route to that pursued by the Egyptian adventurers. Sataspes doubled Cape Soloeis, and proceeded a long way beyond; but at length lost heart, and turned back. Returning home, it is related that he underwent his original sentence.

In the time of Ptolemy Euergetes, according to Cornelius Nepos, Eudoxus of Cyzicus repeated with success the Egyptian exploit. He sailed through the Straits of Babel Mandeb, and pursued his course until he too emerged at the Straits of Gibraltar. He afterwards attempted to make the voyage in the opposite direction, but with no more success than had befallen Sataspes. This seems to have been the last expedition of the kind essayed by the ancients. The southern coast of Africa remained unknown for fifteen hundred years, until laid open by Diaz and Da Gama.

Chapter V

Herodotus—Strabo—Pliny

PASSING on from the times which must be regarded as more or less legendary, we come to those of sober history. Of historical travellers there are not many. They are Herodotus, Ctesias, Megasthenes, Strabo, and Pliny. If Aristotle had really accompanied Alexander the Great in his Asiatic expedition, he would have been entitled to be included in the list. But the story of his having done so is to be found only in late writers, and it is generally rejected by scholars as fabulous. Xenophon again, though doubtless he travelled to a very considerable distance from his native land, must be regarded rather as a soldier and a military historian, than a traveller. Nay, when we come to revise even our short catalogue we shall be obliged to strike two of them out; for the information to be gathered from the scanty remains of the writings of Ctesias is nearly all to be found in other writers also; while of Megasthenes's personal history we know next to nothing, and of all that he wrote only a few fragmentary quotations survive in the works of Eusebius and others.

Among the three which remain by far the most eminent is Herodotus. He has not escaped the fate which almost every great traveller has encountered from the outset of history. He has indeed been pre-eminently singled out as the mark for obloquy, more than one writer styling him "the father of lies," and it has been the slow advance of human knowledge—acquired as this has been by the continued researches of one explorer after another—that has at last fully vindicated his

character for perfect truthfulness. "In order to form a fair judgment of Herodotus," says a modern writer, "we must distinguish between those parts, in which he speaks from his own observation, and those where he merely repeats what he was told by priests, interpreters and guides. By the latter he was, undoubtedly, often deceived. In many places indeed, he intimates his own suspicions to that effect, adding to their reports the words 'saying what I can hardly believe,' or 'others must judge of the truth of this,' and the like. But whensoever he speaks from his own observation, Herodotus is a very model of veracity and accuracy. The more those countries, of which he speaks, are explored by modern travellers, the more firmly has his authority, as a correct reporter of men, manners, and things, been established. There is scarcely a traveller who goes to Egypt, the East, or Greece, who does not bring back a number of facts, which place the accuracy of Herodotus in the most brilliant light. Many things which used to be laughed at as impossible or paradoxical are found to be in strict accordance with the truth." (Professor Schmitz in "Smith's Dict. of Biog.")

As regards his personal history, little is known respecting it. He was born at Halicarnassus in Caria, a Dorian colony governed by a king, and the date of his birth is commonly give as 484 B.C (Aul. Gell. xv. 23). Suidas states that our historian, unable to endure the tyranny of Lygdamis, who was king of Halicarnassus in his early youth, migrated to Samos, where he learned Ionic Greek, in which he wrote his history. Later in life he returned to his native city, but was again compelled to leave it, and ultimately settled at Thurii in Italy, where he died at an advanced age.

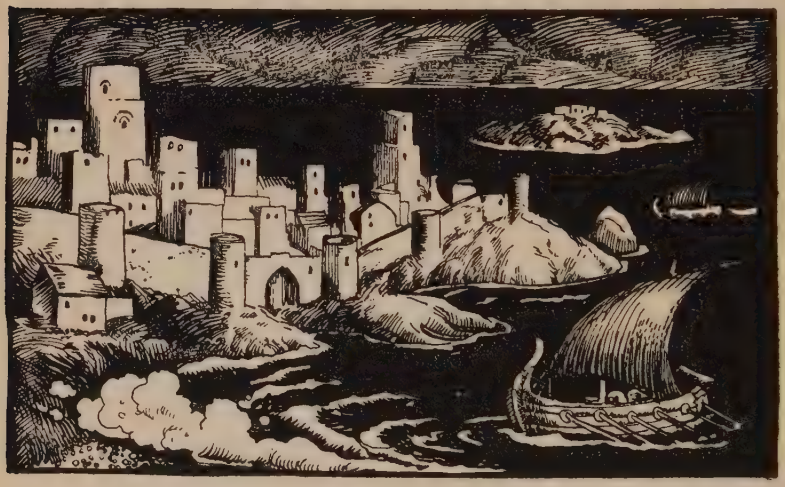
He is not only one of the most truthful of historians, but the simplicity and *naïveté* of his style have a charm such as few later writers possess. Perhaps this very characteristic excellence may be one reason why his accuracy has been called in question, his true narratives having all the attractiveness of fiction. Here is one of his Egyptian stories about Rhampsinitus, King of Egypt, which he received and has related as

veritable fact, but which for spirit and graphic power may match with any fairy tale that ever was written.

Rhampsinitus was a King of Egypt who had collected enormous wealth—so great, that none of his posterity ever possessed such an accumulation of money, or anything near it. He was troubled how to secure the custody of his riches, and ordered a chamber of solid stone to be built in order to receive it. This building had one outer wall; and in this the builder, who was aware of the purpose for which it was erected, left one of the stones uncemented, so that it might be removed and again replaced, without discovery. He did not make any use of this himself. Perhaps he did not live long enough for the purpose. But on his death-bed he confided the secret to his two sons, advising them forthwith to avail themselves of the information, by robbing the royal treasury. With this edifying parental admonition he departed this life; and his sons, who seem to have been two genuine chips of the old block, proceeded dutifully to obey the injunction. They went by night, discovered and removed the stone, and helped themselves liberally to Rhampsinitus's treasures. The king, who seems to have employed himself after the same fashion, as the king celebrated in the nursery rhyme—in "counting out his money"—speedily discovered the diminution of his stores, and took measures accordingly. He ordered some traps to be made, and placed them round the jars, in which the coin was stored.

Presently the thieves again made their entrance, and one of them was caught in a trap, from which he was unable to release himself. Finding all his efforts vain, he told his brother, that his own life was clearly forfeited, and that of his brother would be sacrificed also if he should be recognised. He therefore suggested to his brother that he should kill him, cut his head off and carry it away with him. The brother that his own life was clearly forfeited, and that of of this remarkable family, fell in readily with this suggestion. He cut his brother's head off and departed, carrying it with him, and replacing the stone as before.

The king, when he came in the morning, to see what had been the effect of his traps, was exceedingly puzzled to find that a thief had indeed been caught, but one without a head—though it was evident enough, by the cleverness with which the chamber had been entered, that the thief in question had been by no means wanting in brains during his lifetime. Resolved to discover the accomplices, which he evidently must have had, he hung up the headless body against a wall, and placed a guard near it, ordering them to take note of any one, who might exhibit any signs of mourning over the body,



and bring them to him. He knew that the withholding of the rites of sepulture was regarded by the Egyptians as so terrible a calamity, that they would never permit it, if it was in their power to prevent it.

He was not wrong in his reckoning. The mother of the decapitated man was shocked and distressed beyond measure, and threatened her surviving son, that if he did not rescue his brother's body and give it decent burial, she would disclose the whole matter to the king. The brother in this sore strait, loaded some asses with skins full of wine, and drove them through the streets to the spot where the corpse was hanging. When he had arrived there, he contrived to loosen the necks

of one or two of the skins, and the wine began to pour out. The guards, perceiving the apparent mishap, ran up with any vessel they could find and filled them with the wine, which they appropriated to their own drinking. The owner stormed and raved, but to little purpose; he presently quieted down, and began to exchange jests and small talk with the soldiers. At length they got to be such good friends that he bestowed another skin full of wine upon them; and they all sat down to drink together, he taking care to keep sober. Before nightfall they were helplessly intoxicated; and the thief took down his brother's corpse, which he carried off and buried, amusing himself before his departure, by shaving the right cheeks of all the guards, as a souvenir of his visit.

The remainder of the tale is not edifying. Enough that Rhampsinitus was ultimately so overcome with admiration at the cleverness of the rogue, as to proclaim publicly that, if the man would declare himself, he would not only pardon him, but bestow large gifts upon him. The thief, trusting the king's word, accordingly went to him and revealed the whole matter. Thereupon the king declared, with a true touch of national self-conceit, that the Egyptians surpassed all other men in knowledge, but this man surpassed all the Egyptians; and, thinking it better, apparently, to keep so much talent in the family, straightway married him to his daughter.

This is simply an amusing story, doubtless told as Herodotus tells it, and the historian's accuracy cannot be impeached, though some particulars of it are quite incredible. But he does pledge himself for the truth of an equally original and diverting history—the annual auction of marriageable girls among the Babylonians.

"Once a year," he tells—doubtless the Babylonian "season"—"the girls from all the villages" (country houses) "are collected together in one place"—the Babylonian May fair. "The men stand round looking on. Then a crier, or auctioneer, calls up the girls, one by one, and offers them for sale. He begins with the most beautiful; when she is sold, generally for a considerable sum, he offers for sale the one

who comes next in beauty. The richest of the unmarried Babylonians bid against one another for the loveliest maidens; while those of a lower rank take the more homely damsels, with marriage portions. For the custom is that, when the auctioneer has gone through the whole number of lovely virgins, he calls up those who are the ugliest, and offers her to the men, asking who will take her with the smallest marriage portion. The marriage portions are supplied by the money paid for the beautiful damsels; and thus the fairer maidens portion out the uglier."

Herodotus is generally suspected of having embellished the narrative of this very peculiar mode of "getting off" young ladies, who are found to remain long on hand, with some inventive touches of his own; and in truth there is a sly humour in his mode of telling it which might reasonably suggest such a suspicion. Some of my readers may remember the very graphic representation of it, which adorned the walls of Burlington House a few years ago, where it was accounted to be one of the most successful pictures of the year: the painter having quite caught the spirit of his author. But neither historian nor artist has exceeded the truth. Other writers, as Strabo for instance, report that it still existed in their days, as well as among other nations. Something of the kind is described by Marco Polo, as being in force in the dominions of Kubla Khan. "The great khan," he tells us, "sends his commissioners to bring in four or five hundred, or whatever number may be ordered, of the most beautiful virgins." They set a value on the comparative beauty of the girls in this way. The commissioners on arriving, assemble all the young females of the province in the presence of an appraiser, appointed for that purpose. He carefully surveys the "points" of each girl in succession—as, for example, her hair, her complexion, her eyebrows, mouth, lips, and the proportion of her limbs. He then sets down some as being worth 15 carats, some 20, 25, 30—more or less, according to the sum of the beauties or defects of each. Those that have attained the lowest standard fixed by the great khan, say 24

carats, are appraised by a fresh set of valuers, and a further selection is made; the process being repeated, until the number is reduced to 40 or 50. Colonel Yule remarks that this is simply a competitive examination in beauty—total marks attainable, 40; no candidate to pass, who does not attain 24. There is an uncompromising simplicity about the process that is quite refreshing in these artificial days.

It would be impossible to name all, or even a considerable part of, the statements made by Herodotus, which have been challenged by critics—how he tells of nations of men with one eye, or the heads of dogs, the nations that have no names, and the nations who sleep for six months in every year.[1] Most of these assertions are made by other writers also, and are considered elsewhere. We can only notice one or two of his most remarkable narratives, such as the ants of Upper India, and the amputation of his own foot by Hegesistratus.

The deserts to the north of the Indians, he tells us are inhabited by *ants* which are larger than foxes in size, and attack travellers so fiercely as to endanger their lives. When the Indians wish to procure the gold dust, which abounds in those regions, they take with them three camels, two males, and a female which has left its young at home. They choose the time when the ants have retired under ground to avoid the heat. They load their sacks with the gold dust, and lay them on the male camels, themselves riding on the female. Presently the ants, scenting human flesh, come out of their holes and follow them. They are so swift of foot that unless the Indians have a considerable start of them, they soon overtake them. If hotly pursued they let the male camels go, and escape on the female.

This has been treated as a monstrous figment. But it may be remarked that the same story has been repeated by one traveller after another, with very little variation up to the

[1] These are people who live a long way beyond other nations to the North, and it is possible that Herodotus may by this form of expression refer to the six months' night of the Arctic regions.

thirteenth and fourteenth centuries of the Christian era. Megasthenes, Dio, Pliny, Ælian, Maundeville all relate the same particulars. If there had not been some truth in the narrative, it surely would have been corrected in the course of so many centuries. Nearchus, the companion of Alexander the Great, relates that he actually saw the skins of several of these ants in the Macedonian Camps, though he had not encountered living specimens: nay, De Thou, a French writer of credit in the 17th century, says that one of these ants was sent as a present to Solyman in 1559.

It is probable that an animal did exist in the regions where the gold dust is found, of the size and habits described; but Herodotus and others were mistaken in supposing it to be an *ant*. Some naturalists have identified it with the pengolin, found in that region, which is about the size of the creature described. It should, however, be noted that Polo, who is very accurate in his statements, says that in the parts of Thibet where gold dust is plentiful, the natives keep a breed of very savage *dogs,* which may possibly be the animals referred to.

The other story above named is as follows. Hegesistratus, a prisoner confined by the Lacedæmonians, with one leg in the stocks, finding it impossible for him to withdraw his foot, adopted the desperate expedient of cutting it off, and so made his escape from the prison. It has been represented that it would be impossible for him to cut off the entire foot without sawing through the bone, and that if he had attempted the latter, he would have bled to death. But this is founded on a mistranslation of Herodotus's words. Canon Rawlinson rightly renders the passage, "Calculating how much of his foot he would be able to draw through the hole, he cut off *the front portion* with his own hands." This would probably be the toes, and an inch or two of the foot beyond them. Anatomists allow that a determined man with a sharp and heavy steel instrument, might accomplish this and still be able to stand. It is evident indeed that he did not cut off the whole foot, for it is afterwards said that the Lacedæmonians found—

not the "entire foot" but "the piece of the foot" that had been cut off. As for a man's not having sufficient resolution to perform so painful an operation on himself—there have been many instances, wherein persons have been found who voluntarily inflicted far sharper agonies on themselves, than Hegesistratus is reported to have done.

But space will not allow of further notice of Herodotus. We must pass on to Strabo, who enjoys a high reputation, though not equal to that of the older historian. Little is known of his personal history. He was a native of Amasia, a town in Pontus, and is said to have been of royal descent on his mother's side. He lived during the reigns of Augustus and Tiberius, and is supposed to have been born about B.C. 66. He was a great traveller, and most of his statements are founded on his own observation. From this circumstance we should naturally expect a grave and sober narrative. But Strabo can draw a long bow when it pleases him, almost rivalling Pliny in this respect, though it must be allowed much seldomer than the last-named writer. Here are a few specimens: we have space only for a few.

Speaking of elephants, he affirms that they engage in battle with men, regularly observing military tactics. They send out scouts to ascertain the position of the enemy, and when wounded hold out branches of trees, or plants, as flags of truce! He tells us that the people of Daruda eat elephants, and that they capture them in the following way. The elephants rest themselves by leaning against the trees. The inhabitants saw the tree near the root, so that tree and elephant tumble down together, and as the elephants have no joints, they cannot get up again, and the Darudans slaughter them at their leisure![2] (XVI. 4, § 10).

He informs us that the heat in Susa is so great, that the serpents and lizards dare not cross the streets of that city

[2] This notion of the elephant having no joints, originated, I believe, with Ctesias, and is repeated by one writer after another, for many centuries. Even Aristotle appears to believe that they have joints only at the shoulder or hip, but not at both places. Ælian, Solinus, and a host of subsequent writers make the same assertion as Strabo.

at noon-day, because the heat is so great that they would be broiled alive in the passage (xvi. 3, § 10).

He describes the manner in which monkeys are caught. The Indians first of all place under the trees, inhabited by the apes, basins of water, in which they wash their faces and hands, the monkeys meanwhile sitting on the boughs and watching them. Then the hunters place similar basins, filled with bird-lime, as well as pairs of trousers lined with the same commodity. The monkeys proceed to imitate the actions of their two-legged neighbours, when the bird-lime causes their eyelids to stick together, so that they cannot open their eyes, and their legs adhere to their trousers, so that they cannot run, and they are easily caught (XVI. 1, § 29).

He reports, from Iphicrates, that serpents are to be found in the forests, of such enormous size, that the grass grows on their backs as it would in a field; he speaks of leeches, seven cubits long; grapes, each a cubit in size; and artichokes, twelve cubits high and four palms in thickness (XVII. 3, § 4). He describes also a sea-coast, the inhabitants of which have no fresh water. Their practice, he says, is to go without water for four days or so, and then on the fifth, to repair to some fountain or well in the interior, and "swell themselves out like drums!" so returning for another drought of four days. He enumerates other nations whose habits are yet more marvellous than these. Ocypodæ, who can outrun horses; enotocoitæ, who have ears of such prodigious size that they hang down to their feet, and can be wrapped like a quilt round them at night; monommati, men with only one eye; amycteres, men without nostrils; and hyperboreans, who live for a thousand years (XVI. 1, § 57).[3]

The reader will probably think that the above statements make a very considerable demand on his capacity of belief.

[3] Among other curious stories, Strabo furnishes the original (or what appears to be such) of the famous fairy-tale of "Cinderella." While Rhodopis, the Egyptian, was bathing, an eagle caught up one of her sandals, carried it to Memphis, and let it fall into the king's lap, as he was administering justice. The king admiring the shape of the sandal, sends heralds round, till he finds the owner, and marries her (XVII). 1, § 33.)

But it may safely be said that they sink into nothing when compared with the marvels of Pliny, the last on our list. This writer was born early in the reign of Tiberius, and died A.D. 79. The extent of his travels is not fully known, but he certainly visited Africa, Spain, Germany, and the whole of northern Europe as then known. How much of his information was acquired from his own observation it would be difficult to determine, but the great amount of the matter contained in his huge Cyclopædia, called "Historia Naturalis," must needs have been derived from hearsay or other men's writings, and accepted without inquiry. It contains a string of marvels that the world has never seen equalled. After mentioning the one-eyed men, of whom Herodotus and Strabo had already spoken, he tells us that beyond them there is a race of men with their feet turned the wrong way, who nevertheless contrive to run with the most amazing swiftness. These seem to have been the only people that ever realized the modern American notion of "fast progressing backwards." Pliny tells us, as a strange circumstance, that none of these people could be brought to the camp of Alexander the Great to satisfy his curiosity respecting them. The fact may not appear so surprising to the reader.

He next records a nation of men with blue eyes, who are bald from their cradles, and who can see better in the dark than during the day. It is a pity, if these exist, that they are not utilized. In the same neighbourhood there are men who eat only once in three days. These would be invaluable as domestic servants, unless indeed they eat enough on the third day to make up for their two days' abstinence, which would embarrass housekeeping.

In Africa, he says there are tribes possessing the very singular power of destroying sheep, or trees, or children, by simply bestowing praise upon them. These must surely be the prototypes of those reviewers who "damn by faint praise," only that the praise in the instance of the African critic seems to have been genuine—a fault which cannot be charged on

the reviewers. Others inflict death by simply casting angry looks—the old superstition of the evil-eye. It appears also that these people have two pupils to each eye. One would like to know how objects would appear to them.

Greater prodigies are in store. In those same regions are philosophers called gymnosophists, who pass the entire day in staring at the sun, without so much as once blinking; standing meanwhile on one foot. In the mountains adjoining are men having the heads of hounds, who wrap themselves in the skins of wild beasts, pass their time in hunting and fowling, and in place of speaking bark like dogs. Here also is to be found a race called the "monocoli," who, although they have only one leg apiece, are amazingly swift of foot. When the heat becomes excessive, they lie down on the ground, and put up the foot to serve as an umbrella. Being of an enormous size it quite shelters them!

To the westward of these there is yet another nation, where the folk are destitute of heads and necks, their eyes being fixed in their breasts. Their neighbours, again, dispense with noses, two holes in the head supplying the place of nostrils; while others altogether lack mouths. These, of course, are unable to eat or drink, and in consequence live wholly on the scent of flowers and fruit. They are so sensitively delicate, our author tells us, that a bad smell would be fatal to them. It is to be feared that their existence in any modern city would be but a brief one.

How much of this farrago of monstrous imaginations[4] ancient travellers may have believed, it is not easy to say. Herodotus, as we have seen, usually guards himself, by some phrase intimating that he had been told what he reports, but

[4] It ought, in fairness, to be remarked that many of Strabo's and Pliny's extravagant stories are the result of misapprehension of what foreigners told them. This is the case with the monocoli. "There is no people" (says De Marignoli, A.D. 1338), "who have but one foot, which they use to shade themselves withal. But as all the Indians commonly go naked, they are in the habit of carrying a thing like a little tent roof on a cane handle, which they open, at will, as a protection against sun or rain. This they call a chatyr, and this the poets have converted into a foot."

does not believe it, or thinks it at best very doubtful. The others do not ordinarily do this; but still it would be unfair to assume that they gave full credit to all they narrate. Probably, after all, their feeling on the subject was that of the great Scotch novelist, two thousand years afterwards:

> "I know not how the truth may be,
> I tell the tale, as 'twas told to me."

MEDIÆVAL TRAVELLERS

WILLIAM SIEGEL

Chapter VI

Cosmas—Tudela—Odoric—Marco Polo

DURING the centuries which intervened between the decline of the Roman Empire, and what are generally termed the Middle Ages, there were a great many so-called travellers—for the most part (if not entirely) monks and crusaders—who were in reality simply pilgrims. They brought back with them abundant reports from the Holy Land of what they had seen and heard, or what they supposed themselves to have seen and heard. But these reports related almost entirely to miracles and legends, and the like; or if they did handle secular matters, their statements, it is to be feared, must be viewed as "Travellers' Tales" in the most dubious sense of that expression. A curious specimen of these is Cosmas, an Egyptian monk of the sixth century, called Indicopleustes, because he had made a voyage as far as India. Nothing can be more significant of how extremely rare travel must have been in those days, than that the mere fact of a man having made a voyage across that part of the Indian ocean, which lies between Arabia and Hindostan, should be sufficient to distinguish him from all others of his generation.

Cosmas's great object in visiting the East appears to have been a desire to put down an heretical and impious notion, which although it had been extensively entertained by learned men for many generations past, was only beginning to be generally adopted—viz., that the Earth was spherical in shape. Cosmas appears to have been of the same opinion as the Sultan, whom Lord Byron describes:—

"He saw with his own eyes the moon was round,
Was also certain that the earth was square:
Because he had journeyed fifty miles, yet found
No sign that it was circular anywhere."

It was, according to his idea, an oblong plain, surrounded by a vast wall, which supported the heavens. This notion was probably founded on some mystification respecting the *"firmament"* which God called "Heaven," which expression induced him to suppose the Heaven to be something solid, which needs be propped up. The alternations of day and night, he regarded as being caused by a huge mountain in the Northern regions of the earth, behind which the sun hid himself every evening. This belief also he held to be endorsed by Scripture, because that speaks of the "Sun going forth like a bridegroom from his chamber, and again hasting to take his rest." It may seem perhaps strange to some that the circular shape of the earth should have been considered unscriptural by Cosmas, seeing that in the 18th Psalm David says "The foundations of the *round* world were discovered." But David did not write the *"round* world." That is only Jerome's translation of the Psalms made in the 4th century. Cosmas either did not know of this translation, or regarded it as of no authority. What proof he expected to find in India more than in any other part of the earth, of the truth of his theory it would be hard to say. Possibly he hoped to reach one of the walls on which the Heavens rested, or ascend the great mountain, and see the sun hide himself behind it. If so, there is unhappily no record of his having accomplished either feat.

With Benjamin of Tudela, a Jewish Rabbi of the twelfth century, the Mediæval travellers may be said to begin. He not only travelled further eastward than his predecessors, but he took note of and described the institutions and habits of the nations he visited; and his reports are in general trustworthy and sensible, though he too can on an occasion make statements, which cause sober readers to open their eyes. Visiting Rome, on his way Eastward, he tells us that the palace of Vespasian is three miles in circumference; that a battle was

fought near it "in times of yore" in which one hundred thousand men were killed, "whose bones are hung up in the palace even to the present day." What a Museum of Anatomy—one hundred thousand skeletons! Also in a cave underground there are the King and Queen—Vespasian and Flavia, it is to be presumed—surrounded by one hundred nobles of their court, all embalmed by physicians and in good preservation, though they must have been there for fully a thousand years!

Arriving in the Holy Land, he finds on the shores of the Dead Sea, the Salt Pillar, into which Lot's wife (according to his view) was transmuted; and although the sheep which browse around it, are continually licking away the salt, it always grows again to its original shape! The reader will hardly require to be told that Lot's wife was not converted into "a pillar" or "statue" either. The word in the original means simply "a solid mass," and the word rendered salt may equally well mean "asphalte" or "bitumen." In all likelihood the molten bitumen burst up on the spot where she was standing, and hardened almost immediately afterwards round her, leaving no trace of her figure.

It should however in justice to Tudela be said, that the idea of Lot's wife having been converted into a column, or, some say, a statue of salt, which still remains on the shores of the Dead Sea, has been very widely entertained both before and after his time. Josephus says, "Lot's wife turning back was changed into a pillar of salt, for I have seen it, and it remains unto this day." (Antiq. I. 12.) Irenæus in the second century also mentions the statue, and affirms that it continues to last with all its members entire. Reland reports an ancient tradition similar to that of Tudela, that as fast as any part of the pillar is washed away, it is supernaturally renewed. Lieutenant Lynch in 1852 found a column of solid salt on the shores of the Dead Sea near Usdum, which the natives declared to be the veritable pillar. Perhaps the saying in the Wisdom of Solomon (x. 7), "A standing pillar of salt is a monument of an unbelieving soul," has given rise to this strange belief.

At Jerusalem Benjamin acquired a piece of information of

real interest and value, if only it could be relied on. This is the discovery of the sepulchres of the Kings of Judah. "Two labourers," he tells us, "who were intimate friends, were engaged in quarrying stones under the foundations of the ancient temple, when they chanced to displace one, which formed the mouth of a cavern. They agreed to enter it in search of treasure, and they proceeded till they reached a large hall, supported by pillars of marble, encrusted with gold and silver, and before which stood a table with a golden sceptre and crown. This was the sepulchre of David, King of Israel, to the left of which they saw that of Solomon in a similar state; and so on were all the sepulchres of the Kings of Judah. They further saw chests locked up, the contents of which nobody knew. They were on the point of entering the hall, when a blast of wind like a storm issued from the mouth of the cavern so strong that it threw them almost lifeless to the ground. There they lay till evening, when another wind rushed forth and they heard a voice like that of a man, calling aloud, 'Get up and go forth from this place.' The men rushed out full of fear and reported to the patriarch what had happened. He ordered the place to be walled up and rendered undiscoverable for the future."

Benjamin also relates that at Alexandria there was a pier extending a mile into the sea, and at the end of the pier a lighthouse on the top of which was placed a glass mirror. All vessels which approached with hostile intentions from Greece, and the other lands to the north and west, could be seen, when fifty days' journey distant (!) by means of this glass mirror, and so precautions taken against any attack. Many years after the death of Alexander, a Greek contrived by means of a cunning stratagem to break this mirror, and the incursions of the Greeks could thenceforth no longer be prevented.

He tells likewise a marvellous tale respecting the burial of the prophet Daniel at Susa. He says that the remains of the prophet, which were interred on the banks of the river Ulai, were supposed by the inhabitants to confer special benefits on

those who dwelt on that side of it. The people who lived on the opposite bank requested that the coffin, with all its contingent advantages, might be removed to their side. This being rejected, the applicants proceeded to enforce their demand at the point of the sword, and after a bloody war it was agreed that the bones of Daniel should be removed every year from one side to the other. This singular arrangement was adhered to till the twelfth century, when Sanjar Shah, the conqueror of Samarcand, chanced to behold the process of removing the remains. Thereupon he declared that he considered such handling of the prophet's bones to be highly disrespectful to him. To accommodate matters so as to be pleasant to all parties, he adopted an expedient, which is, if possible, still more original than the previous proceeding. He ordered the distance between the two banks to be measured, and Daniel's coffin to be deposited in another coffin made of glass, and hung from the centre of the bridge by iron chains. Whether this mode of dealing with the prophet's ashes was not rather more derogatory to him than the former one had been, the reader must judge. Possibly this story may have suggested the strange fancy, so widely circulated, that the body of Mahomet was encased in a steel coffin and suspended between four powerful loadstones, so as to rest between Heaven and Earth

Two centuries later we have a more distinguished traveller in Odoric, the Franciscan friar. This man was born at Pordenone, a city of Friuli, lying between Trieste and Venice, in the year 1286. He is said to have set out on his travels about A.D. 1318, and to have remained abroad until 1330, when he returned home, but only to die. As a traveller, he is as much in advance of Benjamin of Tudela as Benjamin himself is of his predecessors. Odoric's descriptions are minute, intelligent, and generally faithful. He mentions many things of interest quite unknown before and omitted even by subsequent travellers of repute. He notices the small feet of the Chinese women, the division of the Khan's empire into

twelve provinces, the cannibalism of the natives of Sumatra, and the oriental habit prevalent with certain persons of allowing the nails to grow to an inordinate length. He also reports the suttee of the Hindoo women, and the practice of the devotees of Juggernaut throwing themselves under the wheels of the idol's car. He tells occasionally some wonderful stories, but none probably, except what were really told him by the persons with whom he conversed; though it must be admitted that these partake sometimes of the marvellous.

Thus he tells us of canes, which are a *mile* in length, and in these canes stones are found, which if any one wears them secured to his person, he can never be wounded by any kind of iron weapon.

He reports that in a country called Zampa, the fish at certain seasons of the year, are in the habit of visiting the seacoast in such vast numbers, that the sea at such times seems to consist of nothing but fish. When they get near the beach, they leap ashore, and the people of the country come and gather them as they list. This goes on for two or three days together. Then a second species of fish comes and does the same as the first; and so with the other species, each in turn and in order until the last. They do this but once in the year, and when you ask the folk of the country how this comes about, they tell you in reply, that the fish come and act in that fashion in order to pay homage to their emperor. The friar further informs us that he saw in that same country a tortoise bigger in compass than the dome of St. Antony's church at Padua—fully forty feet in diameter, that is to say.

In another island called Sillan (Ceylon) he says there is an high mountain on the top of which Adam mourned for his son Abel for one hundred years; and in a hollow gorge of this mountain, lies a lake of no great size, but with great depth of water. This they say was produced by the tears shed by Adam and Eve on that occasion. "But I," adds Friar Odoric, "do not believe it, because the water springs naturally from the soil." The Mussulmans have a different version (it may be remarked) of the same story; for they say that the river

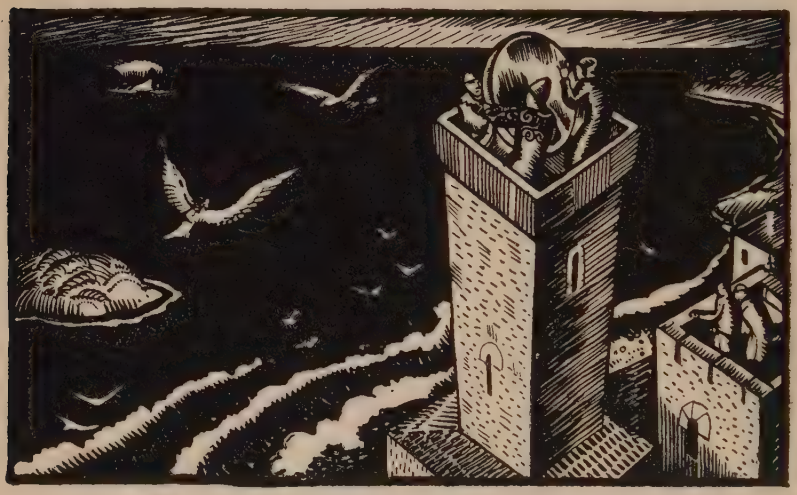
Euphrates sprang from the tears which flowed from Adam's right eye, and the Tigris from those from the left!

Journeying further on the friar comes to a kingdom called Cadeli, and here he meets with certain wonderful melons. They grow, he tells us, to a great size, and when they are ripe, they burst, and a little beast is found inside them like a lamb, so that from the same tree they have both melons and meat! In Sillan also Odoric reports having seen geese which had two heads, and in Thibet, women each with two long tusks, as long as those belonging to wild boars!

The reader will probably think that, for a writer whose veracity is declared by many to be beyond dispute, these are very handsome assertions. Yet it is probable that Odoric either really was told what he reports, or mistook the meaning of his informants. The showers of fish are of no unfrequent occurrence, and are attested by many travellers of indisputable credit. Probably the information that they made their appearance in honour of the king, was some one's jest, which the good friar took literally. The tortoise as big as the dome of St. Antony at Padua, may very well have been a dome covered with *tortoise-shell,* as we learn from other travellers in those regions was not unfrequently the case there. The melon bearing a lamb by way of fruit, is the *Aspidium baromes* of botanists, which does present a rude resemblance to an animal. "It is covered," says the English Cyclopædia, "with a silky down, and when cut, has a soft inside with a reddish flesh-like appearance," sufficient to account for the origin of the fable. The two-headed goose is, in reality, a species of hornbill, "which," says a writer in the "Asiatic Researches," "has a large double *beak,* or a large beak, surmounted by a horn-shaped mandible." And the tusks of the Thibetan women were but the natural product of their jaws (though Odoric probably thought otherwise), but worn by way of ornament, or what they considered as such—as writers of credit attest.

The stones worn as amulets again,—however extravagant this fancy may be, it was certainly entertained, and doubtless reported to Odoric, just as he tells it. Other authors affirm

the same. "When the Khan's people," writes Marco Polo, "had landed on the great Island, and occupied the open country, they stormed a tower belonging to some of the islanders, who refused to surrender, and they cut off the heads of all the garrison excepting eight. On these eight they found it impossible to inflict any wound. Now this was by virtue of certain stones, which they had in their arms inserted between the skin and the flesh, the operation having been performed with such skill, that there was no external sign of it. And the charm and virtue of these stones was such, that those who



wore them could never perish by steel. So when the barons learned this, they ordered the men to be beaten to death with clubs. And after their death, the stones were extracted from the bodies of all, and were greatly prized."

Colonel Yule adds that the like devices to obtain invulnerability are common in Indo-Chinese countries. The Burmese sometimes insert pellets of gold under the skin with this view. At a meeting of the Asiatic Society in Bengal in 1868, gold and silver coins were shown, which had been extracted from under the skin of a Burmese convict in the Andaman Islands. Conti describes the practice in Java, of inserting such amulets under the skin. "The Malays," he says, "of Sumatra have

great faith in the efficacy of certain stones which they pretend are extracted from reptiles, birds, and animals, which prevent them from being wounded."

But the most celebrated of Mediæval travellers, whether regard is paid to the extent of the countries visited, the amount of information furnished, or the general veracity of the statements advanced, is the writer above mentioned, Marco Polo, the Venetian, who was born A. D. 1254, and set out for the east when approaching his nineteenth year. He has not escaped the usual fate of great discoverers. Like Herodotus the Greek, and Columbus the Genoese, like Raleigh, and Bruce, and a host of others, he has been charged with palming off the most extravagant falsehoods as genuine facts; and like these great men again, his memory has been slowly, but fully vindicated. It is notorious that the sobriquet, "Il Milione," or the "Man of Millions," was commonly attached to his name, reference being (as Colonel Yule explains it) to his constant use of the word "million" (which appears to have been a rare one in his day), when attempting to describe the magnificence of the palace of Kubla Khan. We are also told that at the masques, which were of frequent occurrence in Venice, it was common in those days to introduce a character called "Marco Milioni," who told monstrous and extravagant stories, for the amusement of the company. A contemporary records that when Marco was on his death-bed, he was entreated by "friends"—who were anxious that he should not, according to the popular phrase, "go out of the world with a lie in his mouth"—to retract the false statements he had palmed off upon the world. Some of his copyists (those I mean who transcribed his works) have added to their copies frank statements that "what Marco had written was entertaining enough, but they placed no faith in it." Verily there is no truer saying than that a prophet has no honour in his own country.

But it is not Marco's own countrymen only who have charged him with exaggeration and falsehood. English writers of the last century express their doubts whether he ever

entered Tartary or China; and a famous German critic, after giving an outline of the travels of the Polos concludes thus, "Such are the clumsily compiled contents of this ecclesiastical fiction, disguised as a book of travels—a thing devised generally in the spirit of the age, but specially in the interests of the clergy and trade. What they have related of the regions of the Mongol empire, lying further east, consists merely of recollections of the bazaar and travellers' talk; while the notices of India, Persia, Arabia and Ethiopia are borrowed from Arabic works" (Hullman, quoted by Colonel Yule: "Marco Polo," Vol. I).

But the reader will wish to hear something of Polo's history, and of the statements which have provoked this criticism. He was a native of Venice, the son of Nicolo Polo, a man of noble family, and engaged in trade, which was considered as in no way derogatory to patrician dignity in those days. The reader has already been told that the year of his birth was 1254, and that he set out on his travels when near his nineteenth year. He accompanied his father and uncle (who had already made the same journey) to the court of the great emperor of Tartary, Kubla Khan. They were charged with letters from Pope Gregory X. in reply to some sent him by the Tartar emperor, also with some holy oil, on which great store was set.

The three Venetians were received with much distinction by Kubla Khan, and were employed by him in various missions, and other public affairs, during no less a period than seventeen years. Then a longing to return to their native land sprang up in their bosoms, and the great Khan reluctantly granted them permission to depart. They were provided by him with golden tablets, on which were engraved the royal arms. These were at once their passports through all lands subject to the Khan's authority, and an order to supply them with horses, lodging, and all other necessaries at the emperor's expense. They were conveyed in this manner to the court of the Emperor of the Indies, and by him forwarded to Constantinople; whence they took shipping, and in due time arrived at their native city.

Here they found themselves in somewhat of the same situation as Rip Van Winkle, when he emerged from the mysterious valley on the evening, as he supposed, after his meeting with the Dutchman, but having in reality slumbered for five-and-twenty years. They repaired to their palace, but it was tenanted by the heirs-at-law. These were very slow to recognise the true owners of the family property. If the circumstances of these newcomers were to be judged of from their apparel, they would be pretty sure to claim possession of everything which the present occupants had supposed to be their own: in any case they would be an awkward charge on the revenues. But the Poli soon set these small matters to rights. They invited all their relatives to a banquet at which a great many of the leading men in Venice were induced by curiosity to attend. When the guests arrived, they found their entertainers no longer in the mean attire in which they had entered the city, but habited in robes of crimson satin. When dinner was served, they retired for a moment, and reappeared habited in crimson damask, while the cast-off suits of satin were bestowed on the servitors. At the close of the banquet they again withdrew, and again returned arrayed still more gorgeously now in the richest crimson velvet—the servants, as in the former instance, being presented with the discarded damask.

Unable to comprehend the meaning of what they saw, the guests sat in silent wonder. Presently the host disappearing for the third time produced for the inspection of the guests the coarse Tartar dresses [1] in which they had travelled from Constantinople, and ripping open the seams and lining, dis-

[1] An amusing story is told of these dresses. The wife of one of the three was so scandalised at the coarse and ragged appearance of her husband's apparel, that she forthwith gave it away to a beggar, who took himself off, little suspecting the riches which he carried about with him. The next day the owner of the coat inquired for it, and learned what had become of it. Thereupon he devised an ingenious stratagem. He went to the Rialto, the most public place in Venice, and stood there turning a wheel, apparently without any fixed purpose. A crowd gathered round him, and he further stimulated their curiosity by muttering to himself some strange words. All Venice resorted to the Rialto to see; among others came the beggar in the Tartar coat, and Polo was able to buy it back at a small cost.

played a vast accumulation of precious stones—rubies, sapphires, emeralds and diamonds, which had been presented to them by their splendid patron, the great Tartar emperor—such as fairly dazzled the eyes of even the most opulent of the Venetians present.

"Thereupon"—as the narrator of history remarks—"thereupon the company were filled with amazement, and now clearly perceived—what they had at first doubted—that these were in very truth those honoured gentlemen, Matteo, Nicolo, and Marco Polo, and accordingly paid them great respect and reverence."

Marco resided for the remainder of his days principally at Venice. He was taken prisoner by the Genoese in a naval engagement which took place between them and the Venetians, A. D. 1298, at Curzola. He was detained a prisoner at Genoa until 1299. When peace was made, and the captives on both sides were released, Marco returned home and resumed his former place in society. It is believed that he married soon after his release from prison; but the precise date of his marriage is unknown. He made his will in 1324, and, it is generally thought, died shortly afterwards. He was buried according to his own wish in the church of St. Lorenzo.

Thus much of Marco Polo's personal history. In the next chapter we will go on to examine the particulars of his travels.

Chapter VII

Marco Polo—Sir J. Maundeville

MARCO begins his narrative with descriptions of Armenia, Georgia, Mosul, Persia, and Kerman, which are full of valuable and interesting details, but contain nothing of the marvellous, except the legend of the "One-eyed cobbler, who defeated the malice of a persecuting Caliph, by causing a mountain to move from one place to another." But when he has passed Kerman, and is travelling across the desert plains leading to Ormuz, he falls in with the Carauna robbers, and of them he tells us that they are able, by their devilish enchantments, to cause darkness to overspread the whole country for the space of a seven-days' ride, so dense that you can scarcely see the comrade who is riding beside you. Under cover of this unnatural night they are able to pillage and murder as they list. Marco himself had a narrow escape from these villains, all but himself and seven others being slain.

He is accurate, no doubt, as regards the darkness, and the danger he experienced from the Caraunas; but the former is explained without the need of magic. The phenomena known in those countries as the Dry Fog, and the Dust Storm, often cause as great a darkness as that described by our traveller, and is doubtless taken advantage of by the robbers. D'Herbelot relates that the Mongols, on the occasion of one of their skirmishes, were encompassed by one of these dust-storms, which straightway they attributed, as does Marco, to the enchantments of their enemies.

Passing on to the country he calls Mulehet, he gives us the

history of the celebrated Old Man of the Mountain, or chief of the assassins, related also by Odoric and Maundeville, but by none so well as by Marco. "The Old Man," he says, "is called in the language of the country Aloaddin. He had caused a certain valley between two mountains to be enclosed, and made into a beautiful garden filled with every variety of fruit; it contained pavilions and palaces, the most elegant that can be imagined, covered with gilding and exquisite painting. There were runnels flowing freely with wine and milk and honey; and numbers of ladies, the most beautiful in the world, who could play on all manner of instruments, sang most sweetly, and danced in such a manner that it was charming to behold. For the Old Man desired to make his people believe that this was actually Paradise. So he had fashioned it after the description that Mahomet gave of his Paradise, to wit, that it should be a beautiful garden, running with conduits of wine and milk and honey and water, and full of lovely women for the delectation of all its inmates. And sure enough the Saracens of those parts believed that it *was* Paradise!

"Now no man was allowed to enter the garden save those whom he intended to be his *ashishin*. There was a fortress at the entrance to the garden, strong enough to resist all the world, and there was no other way to get in by, but that. He kept at his court a number of the youth of the country, from twelve to twenty years of age, such as had a taste for soldiering, and to these he used to tell tales about Paradise, just as Mahomet had been wont to do, and they believed in him just as the Saracens believe in Mahomet. Then he would introduce them into his garden, some four or six or ten at a time, having first made them drink a certain potion which cast them into a deep sleep, and then causing them to be lifted and carried in. So when they woke, they found themselves in the garden, and believed that it was Paradise in very truth. And the ladies and the damsels entertained them to their hearts' content; and with their own good-will they would never have quitted the place.

"Now this prince kept his court in grand and noble style,

and made those simple hill-folks about him believe firmly that he was a great prophet. And when he wanted one of his *ashishin* to send on any mission, he would cause that potion, whereof I spoke, to be given to one of the youths in the garden, and then had him carried into his palace; so when the young man awoke, he found himself in the castle, and no longer in that Paradise, whereat he was not over-well pleased. He was then conducted to the Old Man's presence, and bowed before him with great veneration, as believing himself to be in the presence of a true prophet. The prince would then ask whence he came, and he would reply that he came from Paradise! and that it was exactly such as Mahomet had described it in the law. This of course gave the others who stood by, and who had not been admitted, the greatest desire to enter therein.

"So when the Old Man would have any prince slain, he would say to such a youth, 'Go thou and slay So-and-so, and when thou returnest, my Angels shall bear thee into Paradise. And shouldst thou die, natheless, even so will I send my Angels to carry thee back into Paradise.'

"So he caused them to believe, and thus there was no order of his that they would not affront any peril to execute, for the great desire they had to get back into that Paradise of his. And in this manner the Old One got his people to murder anyone whom he desired to get rid of. Thus, too, the great dread that he inspired all princes withal, made them become his tributaries, in order that he might abide at peace and amity with them. But it came to pass in the year 1252, that Alau, Lord of the Tartars of the Levant, heard tell of these great crimes of the Old Man, and resolved to make an end of him. So he sent one of his barons with a great army to the castle, and they besieged it for three years, but they could not take it, so strong was it. And indeed, if they had had food within it, never would it have been taken. But after being besieged those three years, they ran short of victuals, and were taken. The Old Man was put to death with all his men, and the castle with its Garden of Paradise was levelled with the

ground. And since that time he has had no successor, and there was an end to all his villanies."

The readers of "Thalaba" will recognise this history, which the poet has introduced into the seventh canto of his work. He speaks in the notes to that canto, of the story, as one told by many writers, but with such difference of time and place, as wholly to invalidate its truth, even were the circumstances more probable. But this is one of Southey's hasty judgments, many of which are to found in his works. The careful student of history will be more disposed to acquiesce in the judgment passed by Col. Yule, that romantic as the story may sound, it seems to be precisely the same that is current all over the East. Odoric's account of it, though plainly derived from a different source, agrees closely with it. So do the narratives of Chinese and Arabic writers. William de Nangis, an authority totally independent of the above, writes of this chief: "He was much dreaded far and near, by both Saracens and Christians, because he so often caused princes of both classes indifferently to be murdered by his emissaries. European writers relate that when the Count of Champagne was on a visit to the 'Old Man,' he one day walked with his host in his garden, and saw some lads dressed in white, sitting on the top of a high tower. The Old Man turned to the count, and asked him if he had any subjects as obedient as his were. Then in proof of this obedience, he simply made a sign with his hand to two of the boys, who immediately leapt from the tower and were killed on the spot." There are doubtless some differences among writers, as to who the sovereign was, by whom he was captured and slain. But in the East, much authority is exercised by potentates who appear to possess independent power, while they are in reality only the deputies of their superiors, and this circumstance goes far to explain such discrepancies. The main facts, in any case, remain unaltered; nor is there any reasonable ground for impeaching Polo's accuracy.

Journeying on through Kashmeer, Kashgar, Samarcand and

Khotan, our traveller reaches the city of Lop, which is on the border of the great desert bearing the same name. Here again we have a startling narrative. "A marvellous thing," he tells us, "has been related of this desert, which is that when travellers are on the move by night, and one of them chances to lag behind or fall asleep, or the like, when he tries to gain his company again he will hear spirits talking, and will suppose them to be his comrades. Sometimes the spirits will call him by name, and thus shall a traveller oft-times be led astray so that he never finds his party. And in this way many have perished. Sometimes the stray traveller will hear as it were the tramp and hum of a great cavalcade of people away from the real line of road, and when day breaks, find that a cheat has been put on him. Even in the daytime one hears these spirits talking. And sometimes you shall hear the sound of musical instruments, and still more commonly the sound of drums."

But Marco Polo here only states what many before and after him have stated—that strange sounds resembling human voices, and rumblings like the roll of drums are heard in the vast deserts of Asia and Africa. That he attributes these to the agency of the spirits may be regarded as superstitious feeling on his part. But the belief that the wilderness is the favourite haunt of evil spirits, is to be found in authors whom we should hardly like to charge with superstition. "The waste and desert places of the earth," writes Archbishop Trench, "are (so to speak) the characters which sin has visibly impressed on the outward face of creation. (Gen. iii. 17). Out of a true feeling of this, men have ever conceived of the wilderness, as the haunt of evil spirits. The wilderness was chosen as a special place where our Lord was to be tempted by the devil. Nor can we forget the saying of our Saviour Himself, 'When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry (that is waste or desert) places, seeking rest, and findeth none.' "

Independently of these considerations, many phenomena de-

scribed are doubtless due to echoes and other acoustic deceptions. The cry of a bird or insect reverberating among rocks or sand-hills, sounds strange and unearthly. Similarly the bells attached to the necks of horses and camels at a great distance would give the idea of music, and the rumblings of the earth prognosticating changes of the weather have been in many other localities mistaken for the beat of drums. Colonel Yule has collected many instances of similar acoustic phenomena in all parts of the world.

Marco now passes into Tartary, and describes among other things the capital and palace of that great potentate, Kubla Khan. The picture he draws of his wealth and magnificence was the main cause (as the reader has already been told) of the distrust in his veracity entertained by his countrymen, and of the nickname "Il Milione," which they bestowed upon him. It is almost needless to say that in this, as in other matters, subsequent research has fully upheld the general accuracy of his statements.

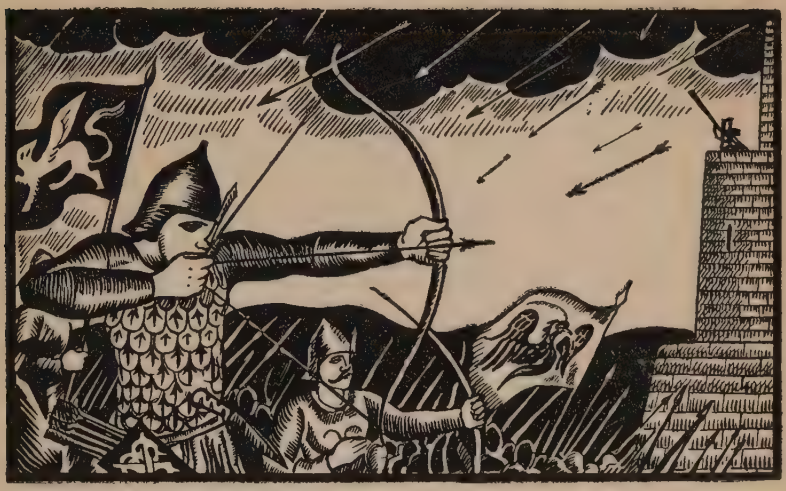
What he relates of Kubla's splendour—his ten thousand white horses, "all pure white without a speck;" his three hundred and sixty thousand horse-soldiers; his palace wall four miles in extent; the palace itself overlaid with massive gold and silver, the great hall of which would hold six thousand guests—might well move men's wonder, but nothing has provoked unbelief so much, as the account he gives of the emperor's astrologers and enchanters.

"During the three months," he says, "of the khan's residence at Chandu, if it should happen to be bad weather, there are certain crafty astrologers and enchanters in his train who are such adepts in necromancy and the diabolic arts, that they are able to prevent any cloud or storm from passing over the spot on which the emperor's palace stands."

"There is also another marvel performed by these enchanters. When the great khan is seated at his table which stands on a platform some eight cubits above the ground, his cups are set before him in the middle of the hall pavement at a distance of some ten paces from the table, and filled with

wine. When the khan desires to drink, these enchanters by the power of their enchantments, cause the cups to move from their places, without being touched by anybody and to present themselves to the emperor!"

But Polo here only repeats the current belief of the age and people among whom he was residing; and that this *was* their belief is attested by overwhelming evidence. As for diverting storms from the royal palace, it is possible that the astrologers may have had sufficient knowledge of electricity to construct lightning conductors, which would divert the electric fluid from



the palace, and this might easily be represented as keeping the storm at a distance. As regards the cups flying about without any apparent agency, that is a mere trifle for oriental jugglers to accomplish. The description given by one traveller after another of the astonishing feats they accomplish, throws Polo's narrative completely into the shade.

From Tartary Marco passed over to Cathay or China, and thence to the southern coast of the Asiatic isles. His account of the fish charmers on the Coromandel shore is one of the strangest of his narratives. "The pearl fishers," he tells us, "proceed into the gulf (off Ceylon), where they stop from the beginning of April to the end of May. They go first to a

place called Bettelas, and then sixty miles out into the gulf. Here they cast anchor, and shift from their large vessels into small boats. The merchants who go divide into various companies, each engaging a number of men on wages. Of their produce they have first to pay to the king the tenth part as his royalty. They must also pay those men who charm the great fishes, to prevent them from injuring the divers, one twentieth part of all they take. These fish charmers are termed Abraiamen; and their charm holds good for the day, but only for the day. These Abraiamen know also how to charm beasts, birds, and every living thing."

The reader may feel incredulous, but any way, Marco has plenty of witnesses to his assertions. The shark, or fish, charmers have existed from time immemorial to the present day. Sir Emerson Tennent gives a full account of them, and says that they appear to do their work efficiently. "The only precaution," he says, "to which the Ceylon pearl-diver devotedly resorts, is the mystic ceremony of a shark charmer, whose exorcism is an indispensable preliminary to every fishing. This power is believed to be hereditary, nor is it supposed that the value of his incantations is at all dependent on the religious faith of the operator; for the present head of the fish-charming family happens to be a Roman Catholic! At the time of our visit, this mysterious functionary was ill, and unable to attend, but he sent an accredited substitute, who assured me that though he himself was ignorant of the grand and mystic secret, the fact of his presence, as a representative of a higher authority, would be recognised and respected by the sharks."

Strange to say, though the gulf abounds with these hideous monsters, not more than one authenticated accident from this source is known to have occurred, during any pearl fishery since the British have had possession of Ceylon. In all probability the reason is that the sharks are alarmed by the unusual number of boats, the multitude of divers, the noise of the crews, the incessant plunging of the sinking stones, and the

ascent and descent of the baskets filled with shells. The stones in particular flung into the water, would terrify the sharks. This is the usual expedient resorted to by sailors when a comrade is in danger of being seized by one of these voracious creatures.

Space will not allow of further extracts from Polo. We must pass on to another writer; who if he does not equal the Venetian merchant in truthfulness and intelligence far exceeds him in the marvels he relates, and it may be added in the popularity he enjoyed in his own and many succeeding generations.

Sir John Maundeville, the first of the many Englishmen who have written books of travel, was born at St. Albans A.D. 1300, or thereabouts. He seems early to have set his mind on visiting foreign lands, and, as the best mode of qualifying himself as a traveller, devoted his early years to the study of medicine. He was comparatively a young man, probably not more than five and twenty, when he left England. He remained abroad, we are told, for thirty-four years, returning home in 1356, when he wrote the history of his travels first in Latin, then in French, and lastly in English, "that all his nation might understand them." It is evident that his reading had extended beyond the study of physic, as he shews intimate knowledge of several classical writers, as for example of Pliny, and Solinus. It is a disputed point whether he could ever have seen the writings of Marco Polo, or whether in the course of his travels he came in contact with Friar Odoric. Considering that Marco's memoirs were not committed to writing at all until the commencement of the 14th century, that the multiplication of copies was a very slow and costly process, and that Maundeville departed for the East in 1324, it would seem very improbable that he could have seen or heard of Polo's book. It is more likely that he fell in with Odoric while travelling in the East. In fact he does in one passage speak of two Friars *Minors,* accompanying him through the Perilous Valley (chap. 28) and these two may well have been Odoric and his Irish friend. How much of Odoric's information Sir John

may have picked up either from his conversation or his journal, will, I suppose, always be a matter of doubt.[1] According to his own account he proceeded after the usual fashion, first to Constantinople, thence to Jerusalem, the Holy Land and Babylon; to a description of which countries the first part of his narrative is given up. This contains nothing but what many others have recorded. When he gets beyond Trebizond, he grows more interesting. Then we have the famous story of the Castle of the Sparrow-hawk.

"In that country (Erzeroum)," he writes, "there is an old castle on a rock, called the Castle of the Sparrow-hawk. They who visit it find a sparrow-hawk on a perch and a fair ladye of fayrie, who keeps it. Whoever will watch that sparrow-hawk seven days and seven nights (some men say three days and three nights) without company and without sleep, that fair lady shall give him, when he hath done, the first wish that he will wish of earthly things. Once a king of Armenia who was a worthy knight and brave man, and a noble prince watched that hawk some time and at the end of seven days and seven nights the lady came to him, and bade him wish, for he had well deserved it. He answered that he was a great lord enough, and well in peace, and desired nothing but that that lady should take him for her lover. She answered him that he knew not what he asked, for she had only promised him earthly things, and she was not of the earth. He replied that

[1] Some writers (as Colonel Yule) consider that Maundeville derived nearly the *whole* of his information from one writer or another, as he certainly did a great part of it. If all his thefts were traced out, "I suspect the knight would come out of the process almost in his buff," he writes. He even doubts whether he was ever in any country further east than Palestine, or wrote anything original, unless it may have been the embellishments, which his own lively fancy suggested, of the tales which he had stolen from his neighbours. But the colonel is somewhat hard on his adversary. The good knight was certainly abroad for thirty-four years, and must have seen and noted *something* during those years. Further, it may be noted that when he produces some monstrous figment from Pliny, &c., he does not say he saw it himself, while on the other hand he *does* distinctly say that he personally witnessed several things in the far East (as chaps. 21, 26, 28, &c.). Moreover, writes of his own, or near his own, time would certainly have detected him had he been a mere plagiarist; and such an opinion as Colonel Yule's never was entertained of him. Purchas in the sixteenth century, held the reverse opinion to the colonel's.

if he could not have her, he would ask for nothing else; and thereupon to punish his presumption, she would bestow a gift on him: which was that he should always be at war, always in subjection to his enemies, and always lack the good things of life: and ever since that time," proceeds Sir John, "the Kings of Armenia have never been at peace, or rich, and have ever been under tribute to the Saracens. At another time the son of a poor man watched the hawk and wished that he might have good success, and be fortunate in merchandise, and the lady granted it him, and he became the richest and most famous merchant, that might be on sea or land. He was wiser in wishing than the king. Also a Knight of the Temple watched there, and wished for a purse ever full of gold. And the lady granted it; but she told him that he had asked the destruction of his order, for the trust in that purse, and the great pride they should have, and it happened so."

Proceeding further, Maundeville reaches Mount Ararat, which he tells us is seven miles high, but nevertheless Noah's Ark is distinctly to be seen on the top of it; and there are persons who profess to have ascended the mountain, and laid their hands on the Ark. But this he pronounces to be untrue, since only one man has ever been to the summit—a monk, who brought back with him one of the planks of the Ark, which is still to be seen in a Monastery at the foot of the mountains, to the confusion of all unbelievers. Proceeding through Asia Minor and the Southern regions of India, he reaches the island of Java, where his descriptions may vie with any to be found in the Arabian Nights.

"The king of that country," he writes, "hath a noble and very wonderful palace, and richer than any in the world: for all the steps leading to the hall and chambers are alternately gold and silver; and the pavements of halls and chambers are squares of gold and silver, and all the walls within are covered with gold and silver in thin plates, in which plates are inlaid stories of battles of knights, the crowns and circles about whose heads are made of precious stones and rich and great pearls."

The palace of the great khan (which he describes further on) is, if possible, still more magnificent. "The emperor's throne is of fine precious stones bordered all about with purified gold and silver and precious stones mixed with gold. Above the emperor's table and the other table is a vine made of fine gold, which spreads about the hall, and it has many clusters of grapes, some white, some green, some yellow, some red, and some black—all precious stones—the white, beryls and irises; the green, emeralds; the yellow, topazes; the red, rubies; the black, onyxes and garnets. All the vessels, wherewith the guests are served are of precious stones—jasper, amethyst or fine gold."

Leaving Java, the knight travels on to an island which he calls Calanak, where, he tells us, the king marries a new wife every day, like the Sultan in the Arabian Nights, only he does not dispose of them every morning after the simple fashion there pursued. Of this island he tells the same story as Odoric respecting the fish. "All the fish that are in the sea come once a year to the coast, in so great multitudes, that a man can hardly see any thing but fish, and there they remain three days, and every man of the country takes as many of them as he likes. And that kind of fish, after the third day, departs and goes back into the sea. And after them come another multitude of fish of another kind, and do in the same manner as the first did, another three days; and so on with the other kinds, till all the divers kinds of fishes have been there, and men have taken what they like of them. And no man knoweth the cause wherefore this may be. But the people on the country say that it is to do reverence to the king."

The reader will probably think that this is a somewhat singular mode of showing respect to the king of Calanak, but the reason alleged for it—which is peculiar to Sir John's narrative—is still more remarkable. It is because he has such an enormous number of wives and children! The fishes are of opinion that he, beyond all other men, fulfils the command, "Increase and multiply and replenish the earth," and in ap-

proval of the extraordinary sense of duty, he displays in this respect, they pay him this special compliment!

It has been already remarked that Maundeville was well acquainted with Pliny's writings and has borrowed largely from him. He has repeated, in fact, nearly all the monstrous statements contained in chap. VI. of Pliny. But he has added some for which the Roman naturalist is not responsible, and which do honour to the fertility of his imagination.

"In one island," he tells, "are to be found snails so large, that many men can live together in one of their shells, as men would in a small house;" in another, "there is a well that during the day is so cold that no man may drink it, and during the night so hot, that no man may suffer his hand therein." In Æthiopia "all the wells are rendered *salt* by the heat." It is no wonder to find him adding that "the folk of that country drink but little, and have small appetites and live not long."

"In Bucharia," he says, "are trees that bear wool, as though it were of sheep, whereof men make clothes, and all things that may be made of wool. In that country too are many 'ipotaynes' that dwell some times on the land, and sometimes in the water, and they are half men and half horse, and they eat men when they take them. And in that country are many griffins. Some men say that they have the body upward of an eagle, and beneath of a lion, *and that is true!*"

It is to be feared that it would be a hopeless task to attempt the defence of the good knight's veracity, unless at the expense of his unbounded credulity. Here and there no doubt there is a real fact at the bottom of his strange assertions, as in the instance of the tree bearing wool, which no doubt is the cotton-tree. But as a rule his capacity for belief appears to have grown larger with exercise, and he seems to have reckoned on a similar growth on the part of his readers. Nevertheless it would appear that he had his misgivings on this head, for on his route homeward, or subsequently, he took the precaution of submitting the journal of his travels to the inspection of the Holy Father, requesting him, of his infallible wisdom, to correct any misstatements that might be found in it. The

pope was graciously pleased to have it examined by his council accordingly, and then solemnly endorsed its veracity. "And so my book," writes Sir John triumphantly, "is affirmed and approved by our Holy Father in manner and form, as I have said." After that, who should presume to doubt a word of it?

STRANGE QUESTS

Chapter VIII

The Terrestrial Paradise—Fountain of Youth—El Dorado

BEFORE we take our leave of mediæval travellers, it will be proper to notice one or two fancies connected with them; which, during the Dark and Middle Ages, took a strong hold on the popular mind. For, although these were, in some measure, the creation of men's imaginations, they were, to say the least, stimulated by the wild rumours, which the travellers of those days brought home from the lands they had visited. Among these may be more particularly named the searches after the Terrestrial Paradise, the Fountain of Youth, or Elixir of Life, and El Dorado, the supposed region of illimitable gold. We may remark, that although the search after these failed, it led, nevertheless, to discoveries, which have been of the utmost benefit to mankind. We may add to the list above given, the pursuit, in comparatively modern times, of the North Western Passage, and the Polar Basin.

To take them in order—the belief in the existence of a Terrestrial Paradise, is one by no means confined to Christian lands. On the contrary, it exists in the legends of nations, which are widely separated from one another, by distance, climate, race, and language. Early travellers, from whatever part of the world they may have set out, generally returned with the assurance, that if they had not actually beheld the abode of bliss itself, they had at least ascertained, beyond a doubt, where it was situated.

The Hindoos described their Paradise as "the White Island of the West," the dwelling-place of the gods, to which the

virtuous and faithful among men would be admitted. It is styled by them, "The Land of the Sun," "The Paradise of the Moon," and is lavishly decked with every object of delight, which the imagination of man can conceive. The island culminates in three peaks—or rather in the union of three mountains of gold, silver and iron, which form the thrones of the Hindoo Trinity, Brahma, Vishnu, and Siva.

The Chinese and other Buddhist nations in like manner placed their Paradise in the West, and gave the name of "White," to seas and islands lying in that direction; some of which names have survived even to the present day.

The "Elysian Fields" of Homer, and the "Happy Isles," of Hesiod and the later Greek writers, in like manner lay to the West. "A minute examination of classical mythology," says the learned author of "Maritime and Inland Discovery," "would furnish innumerable proofs that popular belief among the Greeks, placed Paradise beyond the Western Ocean. The notion, so widely entertained, that the "Fortunate Islands" are identical with the *Canaries,* is an idle fancy; for the notion of a Western Paradise was entertained long before the discovery of these islands, and is evidently derived from some ancient tradition, common to a large portion of the human race.

It needs not to add that Christian travellers adopted a different view of the situation of Paradise. Moses having distinctly recorded that God planted a garden "eastward" in Eden, and there put the man whom he had formed, it would of course be looked for by them in the East. There accordingly Christian pilgrims invariably sought it. By them it is placed in various parts of the Orient, there being scarcely a country of Asia, in which, according to one authority or the other, it is not to be found. Cosmas, whom we have already quoted, places it in a continent lying east of China, and declares it to be still watered by its four rivers. Others place it in the central parts of China itself. Some declare it to be situated in an island to the southeast of Asia; and some locate it on the top of a mountain, so high above the earth, that Noah's flood could not overflow it.

Prester John, in his letter to the Emperor Comnenus,—or

rather that which was issued in his name—affirms that it lies only three days' journey from his dominions. "The river Indus," he writes, "which issues out of Paradise, flows among the plains, through a certain province, and it expands, embracing the whole province with its various windings. There are to be found emeralds, sapphires, carbuncles, topazes, chrysolites, onyxes, beryls, sardius, and many other precious stones." If we could only ascertain where Prester John's dominions were situated, this would settle the matter. But unhappily the domains of Prester John are as difficult to discover, as the situation of Paradise itself.

Sir John Maundeville is confident that he has discovered it, near Polombe or Colombo, in the island of Ceylon. "Of Paradise," he says, "I cannot speak properly, for I was not there. It is far beyond, and I repent not going there, but I was not worthy. But what I have heard say of wise men beyond, I shall tell you with good-will. Terrestrial Paradise, as wise men say, is the highest place of the earth; and it is so high, that it nearly touches the circle of the moon there, as the moon makes her turn. For it is so high, that the flood of Noah might not come to it; which would have covered all the earth of the world all about, and above and beneath, except Paradise. And this Paradise is enclosed all about with a wall, and men know not whereof it is; for the wall is covered all over with moss, as it seems; and it seems that the wall is not natural stone. And that wall stretches from the south to the north: and it has but one entry, which is closed with burning fire, so that no man that is mortal dare enter. And you shall understand that no man that is mortal may approach to that Paradise. By land no man may go, for the wild beasts that are in the deserts, and for the high mountains, and the great huge rocks, that no man may pass by, for the dark places that are there. By the rivers again may no man go, for the water runs so roughly and so sharply because it comes down so outrageously, from the high places above, that no ship may row or sail against it. Many great lords have essayed with great will at many times, to pass by those rivers towards Paradise, with

full and great companies. But they might not speed in their voyage; and many died for weariness of rowing against the strong waves; many of them became blind, and many deaf, from the noise of the great waters; and some perished, and were lost in the waves."

Mr. Baring-Gould, in his most interesting book, "Curious Myths of the Middle Ages," reports the adventures of one Eirek, a Norwegian traveller, who had bound himself by a vow to explore the Happy Land of Scandinavian mythology. In company with a friend of the same name, he proceeded to the East, and made for the spot to which he had been directed, which lay "a little to the East of India," which he is told is the end of the world. In due time he reaches the eastern part of India, and presently comes to a dense forest, so dark, that even during the daytime, the stars could be seen in the sky, as they are from the bottom of a well.

On emerging from the forest, Eirek and his friend find a narrow strait of sea, which separates them from a beautiful land, which they consider beyond question, must be Paradise. Regarding the situation of the strait, they are satisfied that it must be the river Pison. It is crossed by a stone bridge, guarded by a dragon. Eirek's friend does not relish the notion of an encounter with this monster, but the Norwegian rushes at him, sword in hand, and to his astonishment, passing without impediment through what seems to be his open mouth, finds himself the next moment, safely inside the happy garden. Here is his description of it:

"The land is most beautiful, and the grass as gorgeous as purple: it is studded with flowers, and traversed with honey rills. The land is extensive and level, so that there is not to be seen mountain nor hill; and the sun shines cloudless without night or darkness; the calm of the air is great, and there is but a feeble murmur of wind, and that which there is, breathes redolent with the odour of blossom."

Another widely prevalent belief is the existence of a fountain, or as others alleged, a cunningly concocted potion, which would restore the aged to the vigour of youth. Whence and

with whom this idea originated, it is very difficult to say. The possibility of restoring men, when in the extremity of old age, to youth, was entertained in very early times, as the story of Medea very clearly shows. She is said to have made Æson young again by a mixture brewed from certain herbs. In Indian mythology, we read how the Arvinas allowed the husband of Sakanga to enter a certain lake, whence the bather came out again, old or young, or at any age he might himself prefer. The same traditions tell also of a river, the very sight of which made the old young again.

The like idea is to be found in the writings of the Alchemists from almost untold antiquity. It can indeed hardly be said to be extinct even in the present age: for though Lord Lytton's tales of "Zanoni" and "A Strange Story," are doubtless designed by their author as mere works of fiction, there is a lingering idea in the minds of both author and reader, that there may be more truth in the matters related than either care to acknowledge. But we are speaking now of quests, not made by experimental chemists, but by travellers. Our friend, Sir John Maundeville, is not wanting to himself as regards this particular belief. He tells us that he had not only discovered, but had actually drank of, the Fountain of Youth.

"In the city of Polombe," he writes, "there is a fair well and a great, that hath odour and savour of all spices. And at every hour of the day it changeth its odour and savour diversely. And whoso drinketh three times of the water of that well without eating, is made whole of all manner of sickness he may have. And they that dwell there, and drink often of that well, they never have sickness, and are always young. Some men call it the well of youth, for they that often drink thereof, seem always young, and live without sickness. And men say that the well cometh out of Paradise, and therefore it has such virtue. I have drunken of it two or three times, and still," he adds—oh, most lame and impotent conclusion!—"and *still methinks I feel the better for it.*" Had it been a quack medicine of the nineteenth century, he could hardly have spoken less enthusiastically of it. The good knight, elsewhere,

towards the end of his book, complains that he suffers grievously from rheumatic gout—the draught from the well of youth notwithstanding. Perhaps it was some twinge of this malady that induced him to write with less than his usual fervour of this wonderful fountain.

But the most celebrated of all the attempts to discover the Fountain of Youth, was made by the Spanish Cavalier, Ponce de Léon, in the sixteenth century. This adventurer, we are told, was induced by the vague traditions circulated by the natives of the West Indies, to undertake the quest after it. They told him there was an island called Bimini lying towards the North, in which was a fount, a draught from whose waters restored the aged to the full vigour of early life. He resolved straightway to be the first to discover this marvellous region. With this view he resigned his governorship, and set sail with three caravels, on the third of March, 1512. Steering N.N.E. he came upon a country covered with flowers and verdure; and as the day of the discovery happened to be Palm Sunday, which the Spaniards call "Pasqua Florida," he called the new land Florida, in honour of the festival.

Juan after awhile appears to have been convinced that Florida was not the Bimini, of which he was in search; and he returned to Porto Rico, intending to make a further attempt to find it. In the course of this voyage, he discovered the Bahamas, and some other islands hitherto unknown, after which he put into the island of Guaninia, to repair his vessels. Thence he despatched Juan Perez Ortubia, his lieutenant, to gain information respecting the desired land, which he had, as yet, been wholly unable to discover. He returned to Porto Rico on September the twenty-first, and a few days afterwards Ortubia arrived with news of Bimini. He reported that he had explored the island,—which he described as large, well-wooded and watered by numerous streams,—but that he had failed to discover the fountain. "Juan gained reputation by this voyage," writes Washington Irving, "and the title of Adelantado of Bimini and Florida was conferred upon him, and he has the credit of being the discoverer of Florida and

certain of the Bahamas. But the search for the Fountain of Youth proved purely visionary."

I cannot omit here, to mention the noble use which Hawthorne has made of this wild fable. He represents Dr. Heidegger, a somewhat cynical old philosopher, as having really discovered this wonderful water, and making experiments with it, to see what would be the consequence of restoring the old, with all their acquired experience of life to youth again. He invites four of his contemporaries—three gentlemen and a lady, and gives them repeated draughts from the bowl, in which the elixir is stored, though he himself declines to be one of the drinkers. Here is the scene he describes.

"Did you never hear of the fountain of youth?" he inquired of his guests, "which Ponce de Léon, the Spanish adventurer, went in search of?"

"Did Ponce de Léon ever find it?" asked the Widow Wycherly.

"No," answered Dr. Heidegger, "for he never sought for it in the right place. The famous Fountain of Youth is situated in the southern part of the peninsula of Florida. Its source is overshadowed by several gigantic magnolias, which, though numberless centunries old, have been kept fresh as violets by the virtues of this wonderful water. An acquaintance of mine, knowing my curiosity in such matters, has sent me some of it which you see in this vase. All of you, my respected friends, are welcome to as much of this admirable fluid as may restore you to the bloom of youth. For my own part having had so much trouble in growing old, I am in no hurry to grow young again."

He accordingly proceeds to administer to his four aged friends several draughts of the water; which restore them, first to advanced middle age, then to the prime of life, and lastly to the first glow and vigour of early youth. Instantly they begin to display all the vanities and follies they had practised sixty years before. The three gentlemen dispute and quarrel, first angrily and then furiously, for the favour of the lady. She practises all the coquetry of her girlhood, inciting to a still higher pitch the passions of her suitors, until in their struggles

they overthrow the vase, and spill the water. This, it is found, is very transient in its effects. The four rejuvenescents soon begin to grow old again, and clamorously entreat the doctor to procure some more of the wonderful water; failing which they resolve straightway to set out for Florida, and quaff morning, noon and night, of the Fountain of Youth. The doctor's final remarks are too fine to be omitted.

"So, the Water of Youth is all lavished on the ground.

Well, I bemoan it not, for if the fountain gushed at my door step, I would not stoop to bathe my lips in it—no, not though its delirium were for years instead of moments! Such is the lesson ye have taught me!"

Next in order are the efforts, so persistently made by one voyager after another, in the early days of the discovery of America, to find El Dorado, the land of illimitable wealth. The idea of its existence no doubt originated with the reports of the travellers, of whom we have already spoken—Polo, Odoric, Maundeville and their brethren. These brought home narratives of palaces, nay, of whole cities where the precious metals were more abundant than they had been at Jerusalem in the days of Solomon, where the houses where roofed with golden tiles, and the floors paved with alternate slabs of gold

and silver. The reports published by the first conquerors of the New World still further stimulated the popular fancy. El Dorado, with its capital Manoa, standing in the centre of a lake two hundred leagues in length—was reported to be not only covered and floored with gold, but to be surrounded by mountains so impregnated with the precious metals as to shine with a dazzling splendour. These narratives so excited the cupidity of their hearers, that they poured forth by thousands to experience dangers and privations and a waste of human life unparalleled in the history of enterprise. It was not, as has been so often affirmed, Raleigh's publications, which originated the illusion. The fable had existed long before his time, in the early part of the sixteenth century, when large expeditions were directed to the western parts of the Andes. We are informed by Oviedo that in 1539 Gonzalo Pizarro went in search of a great prince, of whom report, among other marvels, related that he was covered with powdered gold, so that from head to foot he resembled a golden image worked by the hands of a skilful artist.

One land after another was visited and explored in the hope of finding this coveted spot: one adventurer after another expended his energies, his possessions, and finally his life, in the never-ending quest. When the whole of New Grenada had been, so to speak, exhausted, the search was transferred to Guiana; the Emperors of which, in former generations, were described as having possessed wealth, with which that of Crœsus or Solomon could not have vied. One traveller describes the court of one of these potentates after this fashion. "All the vessels of his house and table, and kitchen, were of gold and silver, and the meanest of silver and copper, for the strength and hardness of the metal. He had in his wardrobe hollow statues of gold which seemed giants, and figures in proportion and bigness, of all the beasts, birds, men, trees and herbs, that the earth bringeth forth, and of all the fishes that the sea, or waters of his kingdom breed. He had also ropes, budgets, chests, and troughs of gold and silver, heaps of billets of gold that seemed wood, marked out to burn. Finally there

was nothing in his country whereof he had not the counterfeit in gold. Yea, and they say that the Inca had a garden of pleasure, in an island near Pana, where he went to recreate himself, when he would take the air of the sea, and had in it all kinds of garden herbs, flowers and trees of gold and silver, an invention and magnificence never till then seen. Besides this he had an infinite quantity of gold and silver unwrought."

Sometimes it was the Spaniards who encouraged the belief in the reality of this paradise of riches, putting forth, like Orellana, wild and extravagant reports of what they had discovered in order to induce adventurers to enlist in their enterprises; sometimes it was the Indians, who wished to please the Spaniards by finding for them inexhaustible stores of the yellow metal; which was of such small account in their own eyes, but so inestimably precious in those of their masters. "If you are so passionately fond of gold," said a young cacique to Vasco de Balboa, "as to abandon your own country, and disturb the tranquillity of distant countries for its sake, I will conduct you to a region where the meanest utensils are formed of it." This land—no other than the unhappy empire of Peru—did indeed yield large stores of the coveted metal. It is related that Francisco Pizarro caused the gold and the silver taken from the Peruvian king to be weighed, and Lopes gives the sum total of it—52,000 marks of silver, and 1,326,000 pesoes of gold. Large as this total is, it fell immeasurably short of the golden dreams of the Spaniard's imagination. It was only when the whole of Central America, islands and all, had been completely ransacked, that the belief in the existence of this shadowy realm of Plutus was abandoned.

It might seem almost an affront to the brave and high-minded men, who, generation after generation, have devoted themselves to the discovery of the North-western passage, to classify it with such objects of pursuit as the three above mentioned. Doubtless it differs from them in two important respects. It was not, like them, a visionary and selfish fancy, but one honestly undertaken for the practical benefit of mankind; and the object sought for has been, after long labour, at last

attained. Nevertheless, in respect of the toil expended, the dangers encountered, the sacrifices incurred, and the disappointments experienced, it bears only too close a likeness to the search after the land of inexhaustible riches or the spring of eternal youth.

The length of time, during which it has been persisted in, is a further point of resemblance. It was first set on foot soon after the discovery of America. Geographers soon learned how great a mistake had been made by Columbus as to the distance which lay between the coast of Africa and Cathay (or China)—a mistake in reality of not less than some thousands of miles. The coveted Cipango of Marco Polo could only, it appeared, be reached by sailing round the Cape of Good Hope, and so upward through the Indian Ocean, journeying, that is to say, some 12,000 or 13,000 miles. But if a vessel could proceed to the northward of the newly discovered lands, and then enter the Pacific through Behring's Straits, the voyage would be immensely shortened. It was resolved by the Portuguese, even before the end of the sixteenth century, to make the attempt, and Gaspar de Cortereal was sent out with a fleet, having orders to essay the passage.

Cortereal persisted for two years in the quest, and discovered a considerable part of the Labrador coast, but in the following year he disappeared,—the first of the many brave men who have laid down their lives in the enterprise. He was followed by Cabot and Pert; but they added little information that was new, and for the time the search was in a great measure abandoned, the way into the Pacific round Cape Horn having now been discovered.

Towards the latter part of the sixteenth century, the English renewed the attempt, and persevered in it for fully forty years. That great navigator, Frobisher, made three voyages in 1576, and the two following years, discovering in the last of them Hudson's Strait. Davis and Hudson succeeded him, and the last named penetrated into the bay, which bears his name, after which he was treacherously abandoned by his crew, and was never heard of more.

Early in the seventeenth century, Baffin, another renowned

name in Arctic adventure, explored Baffin's Bay to its furthest northern extremity, passing Lancaster Sound in the course of his voyage, but not caring to penetrate into it, as being in his opinion simply an indentation with no passage beyond it. His decided opinion, that the passage was impracticable, seems to have discouraged further efforts, for no fresh discovery was made, of any importance, until 1818, when it having been reported to the British Government that the Arctic seas were unusually free from ice that summer, it was resolved to make a fresh attempt. Captains Ross and Parry were sent to examine the shores of Baffin's Bay. They found the various inlets closed by masses of ice, and Captain Ross was of opinion that Lancaster Sound did not differ in this respect from all the others. But Captain Parry would not be satisfied without a closer examination of this locality. He returned in the following year to Lancaster Sound, and passed two or three summers in examining every opening in the coast, which seemed to offer any promise of a passage. Failure after failure did not seem in any way to discourage him. In 1824 he again prevailed on the Government to send him out with two ships, in which he passed two years; when he was obliged to return home with only one of them, the other having been lost in the ice. The Government were disinclined to send out any more expeditions. But it was represented that so much progress had been made by one intrepid explorer after another that the work was almost completed, and it would be unworthy of the country, which had sent out so many heroic spirits to carry on the undertaking, if they paused now on the very threshold of its accomplishment. Accordingly in 1848 Sir John Franklin sailed, in the *Erebus* and *Terror,* to Baffin's Bay, and never returned. Several expeditions were sent in the hope of rescuing him, or at least of ascertaining where he had perished. But it was not until 1854 that any traces could be discovered of him, and then it was found that he and the whole of his companions had died of cold or hunger on the north-west shore of King William's land. But previously to his death he had solved the mystery of nearly 400 years, and had ascertained

that a north-west passage existed through Lancaster Sound between the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans.

Little practical advantage will probably follow from the discovery, so far as trade is concerned. The narrow straits through which alone a passage is to be found, are liable to be continually blocked with ice, and considering the safety and rapidity with which voyages can now be made, through the use of steam, it is unlikely that the passage will ever be used. But we may remark in this instance, as in those of all the other quests, that though the object so persistently pursued, has been, directly, of little or no use to mankind, collateral benefits have accrued from it which cannot be prized too highly. The search after Paradise disclosed countries, which might have remained for centuries unexplored; the pursuit of the Fountain of Youth resulted in the discovery of Florida and the Bahamas; the ceaseless efforts made to open the North-western Passage made known almost the whole geography of the Arctic shores; while it was mainly owing to his wild dreams of El Dorado and Cipango, that Columbus himself laid open the vast continent of America for the occupants of the human race.

STRANGE LANDS

Chapter IX

Atlantis—The Island of the Seven Bishops—The Island of St. Brandan—St. Matthew's Island

CLOSELY connected with the quests described in the last chapter, is the supposed existence of certain lands, which were sought by voyagers in one generation after another, and though never discovered, still continued to be believed in. Now that the whole surface of the globe has been, so to speak, mapped out, these fancies have, of necessity, been laid at rest. But for a great many centuries the faith in them, and their ultimate discovery was persistently retained.

Chief among them was the celebrated island of Atlantis, mentioned first by Plato more than two thousand years ago, and still forming a matter for curious inquiry among the learned. Plato tells us, that in front of the strait called the Pillars of Hercules—the Straits of Gibraltar, that is—there once lay a very large island, larger than Africa and Asia put together, from whence voyagers might pass to other islands beyond, and so to a great continent which formed the western shore to the Atlantic Ocean. In the dialogue called the Critias, he gives a complete description of this island, its inhabitants and its kings. He represents it as fertile and beautiful, reminding us of the description of the land of Canaan, in the book of Deuteronomy, "A land of brooks and water, of fountains and depths, that spring out of valleys and hills, a land of wheat and barley and vines, of fig-trees and pomegranates; a land of oil olive and honey; a land wherein thou

shalt eat bread without scarceness; a land whose stones are iron, and out of whose hills thou mayest dig brass." He depicts the strength and magnificence of this island, its temples and palaces, surrounded by enclosures of gold, roofed with ivory, its walls inlaid with Corinthian brass and adorned with golden statues. He tells us of its military and naval power, and of the race of sovereigns by which it was governed. These latter sprang from the union of Neptune with Cleito, a daughter of earth. The inhabitants of Atlantis, after awhile, made war on their neighbours, and extended their conquests over Africa as far as Egypt, and over Europe as far as Etruria. They then sought to push their conquests into Greece. But the Athenians successfully resisted them, and drove them back to their own land, invading Atlantis itself. Not long afterwards there came a great earthquake and flood, which swallowed up victors and vanquished alike, and the island of Atlantis was engulfed in the sea; which ever since—up to the time of Plato, that is to say—it has been impossible for ships to navigate, by reason of the shoals of mud, caused by the sunken island.

This strange legend has formed matter for endless discussion. Some have regarded it as a mere romance, invented by Plato. But there is his own assertion that the tale, however strange, is true, and there is the testimony of other writers to the main facts, which is wholly independent of his. Some have believed that the story—in all its essential features, that is to say—is true. They think that there existed such an island, though not of the size reported, and that the continent that lay beyond it, is that of America, which does, indeed, form the western boundary of the Atlantic Ocean. But the great depth of the Atlantic Ocean renders this solution, to say the least of it,—extremely improbable. It is a matter respecting which nothing satisfactory in all likelihood will ever be determined. But certainly the impression it produces on the thoughtful reader is, that we have here some dim tradition of the antediluvian world. The race of kings, sprung from the

god Neptune and the human bride Cleito, remind us of the "the mighty men of renown," sprung from the union of the sons of God with the daughters of men: the invasion and conquest of foreign lands, of "the violence with which earth was filled" in those days, and finally the earthquake and the flood, of the deluge which God sent to destroy the earth. This might well have overwhelmed and engulfed that portion of the earth, which intervened in the antediluvian world, between Africa and America.

To make a skip of many centuries, we have next to consider the supposed existence of the "Island of the Seven Bishops." The story respecting this, dates from the era of the conquest of Spain by the Moors in the eighth century.

At the time when the Portuguese were becoming pre-eminent in naval enterprise, some mariners presented themselves one day before the celebrated Prince Henry, and informed him that they had just returned from a voyage, in the course of which they had visited a hitherto unknown, but most interesting, island. Its inhabitants, they averred, spoke the Portuguese language, and were faithful Catholics. As a proof of this, they affirmed that the natives, immediately after the landing of the crews, had insisted upon taking them to church, requiring them to take their part in the service, in order to assure themselves, that their visitors were orthodox Christians. Satisfied at length upon this point, they asked with interest, whether the Moors were still masters of Spain and Portugal. When this question excited some surprise, they explained their reason for asking it. They said that, after the defeat of King Roderick on the banks of the Guadalete, when the inhabitants were flying in all directions to escape the cruelties of their barbarous conquerors, seven of the Spanish bishops took shipping in company with a great number of their people, and sailing away from their native shores, trusted to Providence to guide them to some suitable place of abode. After a long and hazardous voyage, they reached an unknown island in the middle of the Ocean, where they landed. Having burnt their

ships to prevent the possibility of desertion by their followers, the seven bishops divided the island between them, and built seven cities, all of which in the fifteenth century were great and flourishing. During the generations which had intervened since the settlement of the bishops, many Portuguese navigators had at one time or another reached the island; but they were unable to return to Portugal, having been detained by the descendants of the bishops; who, understanding that Spain was still ruled by the infidel, were afraid that their place of retreat might be discovered, and invaded by the enemy. The mariners affirmed, that while part of the crew were in church, the others gathered some sand on the sea shore, and found, to their astonishment, that one-third of it was gold dust. The islanders were anxious that the ships should remain until the return of the governor, who chanced to be absent. But the captain, who had heard of the detention of his predecessors, and was probably afraid that the same policy would be pursued towards himself, returned to his ship, and weighed anchor.

Prince Henry, on hearing the story of the mariners, expressed, it is said, great displeasure at their having quitted the island without having obtained fuller information, and sent orders requiring them to return and ascertain everything of importance concerning it. It is probable that the mariners had privately learnt something of his intentions; for they took their departure on a sudden, and before his message reached them. Nor were they ever heard of again. Full of suspicion as this story must have appeared, it seems nevertheless to have been generally believed: for the island is laid down in the maps of the day, and many attempts were made to reach it. During the time when Columbus was making his propositions to the court of Portugal, an inhabitant of the Canaries applied to King John for a vessel to go in search of the "Island of the Seven Cities," (or Bishops). In the archives of the Torre de Piombo, there is the record of a contract made by the crown of Portugal with Fernando de Ulmo, cavalier of the

royal household, and captain of the Isle of Terceira, wherein he undertakes to go at his own expense in quest of "an island or islands" or terra firma, supposed to be the Island of the Seven Cities, on condition of having jurisdiction over the same for himself and his heirs, allowing one-tenth of the revenue to the king. This Ulmo, finding the expedition above his capacity, called in the aid of one Juan Alfonso del Estreibo. They were bound to be ready to sail with two caravels in the month of March, 1487. The fate of this enterprise is unknown.

Subsequently, when Columbus's discoveries took place, and reports were brought to Portugal of the splendid cities and temples which had been found in the islands beyond the western main, it was not unnaturally believed that this same "Land of the Seven Bishops," or "Seven Cities," was one of them, and renewed efforts were made to reach it. A Portuguese captain, on one occasion, brought home a report that he had actually fallen in with it, off the coast of Yucatan. It was long before the island was relegated to the realms of fancy, where alone it had ever existed.

A still more extraordinary geographical delusion is that of the "Island of Saint Brandan," which, for a great length of time, haunted the imaginations of the inhabitants of the Canaries. It was their firm belief, that far out to the westward there was an island, of about ninety leagues in length, to which the name of St. Brandan was given. This person is said to have been a Scotch abbot, who, in the sixth century, accompanied by his disciple, St. Malo, went in search of some lands said to exist in the Western Ocean; which abounded in all the delights of Paradise, but were unhappily tenanted by infidels. After long wanderings they landed upon an island called Irna, where St. Malo found the body of a giant, whom he disinterred and restored to life. What follows is involved in doubt. According to one legend, the giant was converted to Christianity and baptized. Nevertheless, after fifteen days' experience of his second life, he requested to be allowed to die again, which was accordingly allowed him.

Another account states that the giant engaged to conduct the party to another island, surrounded by walls of burnished gold, and that he set out on the voyage, swimming, and drawing the ship after him, like Gulliver in Lilliput. But a storm arose, and the vessel had to put back, whereupon the giant gave up the ghost—in despair, it is to be presumed, at his failure, for he seems to have been a giant readily given to despondency. A third version of the story declares that the island only appeared in response to St. Brandan's prayers, who entreated that he might land somewhere and celebrate Divine service on Easter Day, and that as soon as this had been concluded, the island sank into the sea again. But however vague and conflicting might be the evidence respecting this land, a belief in its existence was entertained for many centuries, and when the story of the island, which could be seen from the Canaries, gained circulation, it was soon identified with that of St. Brandan.

There was something weird and strange about this *terra incognita* from the first. It was only to be seen at intervals, and in perfectly clear and serene weather. To some it appeared to be a hundred leagues distant; to others, forty; to others, eighteen, or fifteen at most. Still more unsatisfactory was the fact, that however carefully it might be searched for, it was never to be found. But there were so many persons of credit who concurred in affirming that they had actually seen it, and the testimony of different witnesses agreed so well as to its form and position, that its existence was generally believed, and geographers inserted it in their maps. It is laid down on the globe of Martin Behaim, and it will be found in most of the maps used by Columbus, placed commonly about two hundred leagues to the west of the Canaries.

Several expeditions are related to have been sent out in search for it. One despatched in 1526 traversed the whole neighbourhood in which it was reported to exist, but without effect. But this did not satisfy men's minds, especially when the crew of a Portuguese ship brought home a tale that they

had done more than see it—they had actually landed on it. They had anchored in a bay—so ran their report—formed by its cliffs, and had gone ashore, where they had drunk fresh water from a brook, and seen the prints of human footsteps of a gigantic size. Cattle and sheep had been discovered grazing, of which two men had gone in pursuit; a cross had been found, nailed to a tree, and near at hand were some stones, on which a fire had evidently been kindled. They would have awaited the return of their comrades, but the night was coming on, and there was the threatening of a storm. They

hastened to re-embark, and were swept out to sea. When the storm passed away, not a trace of the island could be discovered, and they were obliged to sail away without the two seamen who had been left on shore.

A similar deposition was made before the Inquisitor of the Grand Canary, by one Marcos Verde, a man well known in those parts. He stated that when returning home from Barbary, he arrived in the neighbourhood of the Canaries, he beheld land, which, according to his charts, was not any island known to navigators. He coasted along its shores until he anchored in a beautiful harbour, formed by the mouth of a mountain ravine. Here he landed with several of his crew.

They separated and strolled about in various directions, until at nightfall they were summoned back to the ship. They intended next day to have resumed their investigations. But they were hardly on board, before a violent wind drove them from the coast, and they could never again discover any trace of the island. A similar, or nearly similar, account was given by the captain of a French ship, who declared that he landed and cut down a tree, of which he intended to make a mast; but bad weather came on, and he re-embarked and was driven away.

These repeated assurances of the reality of the island induced the Portuguese Government to fit out another expedition, which in 1570 sailed from Palma. The governor of that island was the commandant. It was as fruitless as all previous expeditions had been; but still the inhabitants of the Canaries were not satisfied. In 1605, and again in 1721 attempts were made to find it, but always with the same result. No vessels appear to have been sent out, subsequently to that time, but the people settled down into a belief, which, not improbably, they still retain—that, like the Castle in the Valley of St. John, celebrated by Sir Walter Scott in the "Bridal of Triermain," it was a Magic Land, only revealing itself occasionally to those whom it especially favoured, or whom, perhaps, it desired to decoy to their ruin. All sorts of legends became associated with it. It was thought to be the country, to which first Don Roderick, and afterwards Sebastian of Portugal, had withdrawn, and where they still await the time of their reappearance on earth.

These "Travellers' Tales" of imaginary islands sound somewhat strangely in our ears; but what I am about to add will, I think, sound stranger still. Will it be credited that in the nineteenth century, an island should have been laid down in the best published maps and described in the most popular manuals of geography,—an island lying apparently directly in the route to one of England's most important colonies,—and yet that that island should no more have a real existence,

than has the island of "St. Brandan" or of "the Seven Cities"? Such nevertheless is the case. Studying carefully the map of the Atlantic, when on the eve of a voyage to the Cape of Good Hope, I became aware of an island called the "Island of St. Matthew." It was situated in lat. 1° 30′ S. and long. 6° 1′ W., as nearly as possible in the direct line between the most westerly point of North Africa and Cape Town. The steamer in fact would pass close to it. It struck me as strange that I had heard so little of this island. As a coaling, and more particularly as a telegraph, station, its value was obvious. Ascension Island could not compare with it in these respects. I had the curiosity to seek for further information about it. I looked up some authorities on the subject. Several popular manuals, such as the "Penny Cyclopædia," only informed me that it was "one of the Atlantic Islands;" but my "Gazetteer of the World," published only twenty years before, told me something more. According to that it was "a small island of the S. Atlantic, 480 miles S. of Cape Palmas, in Upper Guinea. It was discovered in 1516 by the Portuguese. They formed a small establishment upon it, but it was soon abandoned. It contained a lake of fresh water." This was circumstantial enough, but did not explain why no use had been made by England of an island; which, it was plain, was to be had merely for the trouble of taking possession. I made another search among my books, and presently found in the eleventh volume of the "Universal History" a short narrative of its discovery, extracted from Sanuto and La Croix. "The name of St. Matthew had been given to it, because it was discovered on St. Matthew's day. It was about eight leagues in circumference, desert (i.e., unoccupied) but finely watered by a rivulet of clear fresh water, that branched out into a number of lesser streams. It would seem to have been once cultivated, as the Portuguese kept possession of it for some time."

There was no doubt now about the matter. There was the island, only no one had been alive to its manifest importance

and value. On the outward voyage, when we had passed the equator, and were between fifty and a hundred miles south of it, I began to inquire whether we passed in sight of St. Matthew's Island, and if so, how soon we might expect to see it. My questions elicited a blank stare of astonishment from every one to whom I put them. The captain, and the chief engineer, had never heard of such an island. There was no island at all in those parts—none nearer than Ascension, and that was several hundred miles distant. The boatswain "had made the passage fifteen times, and more, and he never heard tell of such an island," nor had any of his mates either. It was just the same on the return voyage. I might as well have asked for a sight of the equinoctial line, or the sea-serpent. Indeed, there would have been more chance of my obtaining my wish, if I had asked for this latter phenomenon. There were persons who professed to have seen the sea-serpent, but none who had seen the Island of St. Matthew.

It was passing strange. On my return to England I again examined my authorities. Had I made any mistake as to what they said? No, none. There was the island, marked plainly as possible in half a dozen atlases which I consulted: there was the full description of it in half a dozen different authors. Was the discovery of the island on St. Matthew's day (A. D. 1516) by the Portuguese; their occupation of it for a time, as a settlement; and their subsequent abandonment of it; their precise measurements of its size, and its products,—were all these so many fictions? Impossible, surely. I applied in my strait to the agents of the two principal steam companies, whose vessels carry the Cape mails. From both I received the most courteous replies, but they were all to the same effect. No such island was laid down in the Admiralty charts; none of their officers, times out of mind as they had made the voyage, had ever seen, or heard of it.

At this juncture one of my juvenile friends hit upon a notable expedient. This was to insert a question respecting the

island in a publication called "The Monthly Packet," which, it appears, keeps a kind of private inquiry office, where all difficulties may find solution; though what security there is, that the person who answers the question knows one whit more about the matter than the person who asks it, does not appear. Accordingly in due season an answer appeared to the query, stating that the Island of St. Matthew was "a small island of the S. Atlantic 480 miles S. of Cape Palmas in Upper Guinea, in lat. 2° S., long. W. 6°, that it was discovered in 1516 by the Portuguese, who settled there, but soon abandoned it." This was brought triumphantly to me, but as this was simply a repetition of what the gazetteer had said, it failed to convince me.

I pursued my own inquiries, however, and at last one of my friends had the wisdom to do—what I ought to have done myself in the first instance. He made application to the secretary of the Geographical Society. Then we learned the explanation of the mystery. The existence of the Island of St. Matthew—reported by the Portuguese as having been discovered early in the 16th century by one of their navigators—had been long believed in, and several vessels sent out in search of it, of course in vain. But after a while it was noted by some one, that La Croix, who mentions the discovery of the island, names precisely its latitude (1° 50′ S.) but its longitude only as 6°, not specifying whether E. or W. The latitude named is also that of Annobon, an islet discovered somewhere about the same time, also by the Portuguese. That, however, lies in long. 6° *East,* whereas that of St. Matthew is reported to be 6° *West.* Now Annobon is somewhat of the same size as the reputed Island of St. Matthew, corresponds to the description given of the latter, and was also occupied by the Portuguese. There can be little doubt that a confusion has been made between the two islands. The Portuguese captain who imagined that on St. Matthew's day, he had found a new island, reported it as lying in "lat. 1° 50′ S., long. 6°." As the island of Annobon lay in the same latitude, and in long. 6°

East, it was assumed that that of St. Matthew must be 6° *West.*

The error thus made has been repeated by one geographer after another, without inquiry, for no less a period than three hundred and fifty years!

MODERN TRAVELLERS

Chapter X

Cook—Phipps—Drinkwater—De Tott—Baron Munchausen

We now come to the last head of the first half of our subject, and have to deal with "Modern Travellers;" but it must be obvious to every reader that it would be impossible to do justice to a subject like this, according to the simple meaning of the words. When we consider the enormous number and extent of the voyages and travels undertaken during the last four hundred years; the wide range of new countries, which have been laid open by them; the multitude of unknown races, differing from those of the older world in almost every particular of importance, which have been made familiar to the reader—we cannot fail to acknowledge, how vain such an attempt must necessarily prove. The very names and dates of the travellers would more than fill the space we are able to accord them.

Nothing more is designed here, than to speak of some of those more notorious instances, where the statements of eminent travellers have been attacked, either as being wholly false, or so exaggerated and loaded with false matter, as to be substantially untrue—although subsequent inquiry has vindicated their accuracy. And here we must repeat the remark as to the strange tendency noticeable in human nature to accept, without question, assertions, respecting which wise men would certainly hesitate and inquire farther, before attaching credit to them; and, on the other hand, to disbelieve the re-

ports of men of character and ability—reports, in which there was nothing impossible, or even unlikely, but which were objected to, simply because they were *new*. The veriest impostors have frequently gained a ready credence, and have enjoyd it undisturbed for a considerable period. The public believed in George Psalmanazer, who professed to have discovered a new language; they believed in William Henry Ireland, a boy of seventeen, who in 1796 forged documents and plays, which he produced as Shakespeare's; they believed in the Princess Caraboo, a simple South country peasant woman, who in 1817 presented herself as a royal personage from India; and in the "Fortunate Youth," who, about the same time, was fêted in London by some of the highest in the land, as a millionaire, when he was in truth a needy adventurer. But the public hesitated and doubted, when Cook, and Phipps, and De Tott, and above all James Bruce, brought home their truthful and valuable records of the lands they had visited, and the discoveries they had made: they lent a ready ear—not to these brave and faithful men, but to the caricaturist, who published his farrago of extravagant inventions to decry and ridicule them. But such always has been, and, it may be presumed, always will be the case, more or less, in every generation. Mungo Park did not venture to publish the most striking facts of his adventures, because (as he himself said) he knew well that they would not be believed.* In our own day M. Huc, the Chinese missionary, Dr. Livingstone, Mr. Gordon Cumming, and M. Du Chaillu, have all been charged with palming off exaggerations anl impostures as truth; and with as little reason, as in the instance of former generations.

To return to Cook and his contemporaries. The work which gave point and currency to attacks made upon them, or

[1] Sir Walter Scott relates that one day when in Park's company, the latter had related to him some of his adventures, which were far more striking and interesting than any which he had published. Sir Walter inquired why he had not given these particulars to the public. Mr. Park answered that, as they were of no practical benefit to mankind, he did not wish to shock their credulity, or gain the reputation of romancing. To another gentleman, who made a similar inquiry, he made the same answer, though in fewer words, "Sir, they were much too marvellous to be believed."

at all events helped largely to diffuse them more widely—was that famous collection of travellers' tales published about a century ago, entitled "The Surprising Adventures of Baron Munchausen." This book still retains considerable attractions; and in a work like the present, a consideration of it must needs occupy a prominent place. It will be proper to say something respecting the time when the book first made its appearance, its authorship (for it was published anonymously), the writer's object in composing it, and lastly the sources whence the stories contained in it are derived. On all these points there have been doubts and disputes.

First as regards the date of publication. This was 1785. The original work was very much smaller than that which is now in general circulation, and contained only 45 pages—a portion of what is now the "First part" of the Baron's adventures. It was published simultaneously in Oxford and London, by a bookseller, named Smith, of Fleet Street. The title was "Baron Munchausen's narratives of his marvellous travels and campaigns in Russia." A second and a third edition appeared in the same year. The title of the third edition was "Gulliver revived, or the adventures &c." This latter is briefly noticed in "The Gentleman's Magazine," (Vol. lvi. pt. 2, p. 590) where the rapid sale of the first two editions is spoken of. From that time, however, it seems to have ceased for several years to attract attention. But it was re-issued after a considerable interval, enlarged, and amended, under circumstances which will be presently noticed.

The authorship was for a long time a matter of controversy. It was ascribed to a writer, who of all men living seemed the least likely to have composed such a book—James Grahame, the author of a poem called "The Sabbath," and a Presbyterian minister of the church of Scotland. Lord Byron in his "English Bards and Scotch Reviewers," is extremely severe on this writer, whom he thinks fit to call "Sepulchral Grahame," and of whom he declares that he—

> "Breaks into blank the Gospel of St. Luke,
> And boldly pilfers from the Pentateuch!"

It is possible that the very fact of the extreme unlikelihood of such a statement respecting the authorship of Munchausen has caused it to be believed—because it was thought that no one would have attributed it to him, except on some very clear evidence. But it should be added that in 1785 Grahame could not have been more than twenty years old, and it is certain that some years subsequently he composed one or two plays, which bore very little resemblance to his later writings. It is possible therefore, though at the same time very improbable, that he did compose the squib in question, when a very young man. A writer in "Notes and Queries," affirms that "from circumstances which came to his knowledge, coupled with Grahame's exceedingly loveable character, it is almost incredible that he could have written 'Baron Munchausen,' " but adds that "Grahame certainly knew who the author was."

In the "Percy Anecdotes," under the head "Captivity," the authorship is ascribed to a Mr. M— who (the writer says) was at the date of the publication of the Anecdotes (1793) a prisoner in France. But it is not stated on what grounds this Mr. M— is assumed to be the author, nor is it known who "Mr. M—" was.

A much better case than either of the above has been made out for a German named Raspé, a Professor at the University of Cassel and Curator of the Museum in that city. Raspé was a literary man of sufficient celebrity to find a place in the "Biographie Universelle," where a list of his writings is given, though "Baron Munchausen," is not included among them. The professor, it appears, made the unfortunate mistake of appropriating to his own use some of the coins belonging to the Museum, of which he was the Custodian, and he was, in consequence, obliged to leave Cassel and take refuge in England. Here he held one or two posts as superintendent of mines, and in the last year of his life he was located at Muckross in Donegal. His death took place at the close of the year 1784. As the "Adventures of Munchausen" was not issued for a twelvemonth afterwards, the publication was a posthumous one, if he was its author.

There are many circumstances which go to prove that he *was* the author. It was published in Germany also almost simultaneously, and that, in the eighteenth century, was a very unusual occurrence. In the preface to the second German edition, the editor speaks of the book having reached a seventh edition in England, and adds, "It is somewhat strange to see the following tales, *which were produced on German soil,* are more appreciated in England than in Germany." And again he says, "However that may be, we find ourselves obliged to import a *native production* from a foreign country." This

certainly implies that the author is a German. There is also extant a letter written by a friend of the editor, in which he says, "The collection (Baron Munchausen's memoirs) had for its compiler the late Professor Raspé, who published it after his flight from Cassel to England." If this statement was made from information given by the editor, as seems most likely, it is decisive.

Again, the author, notwithstanding the frivolous character of the work, is certainly a well-read man, and one acquainted with many languages as Raspé is known to have been—many of the tales being derived from authors of various ages and countries.

But it should be remarked that Raspé could have been the composer of the *first* part only. The later portion, which was not put out until 1790, could not have been his work. It is not unlikely that the Mr. M— whom the brothers Percy declare to be the writer of the book, may have been really the writer of this second part. This latter is different in many respects from the first; more prolix, less varied, and more full of political references and innuendoes. The last chapter especially, which refers to the incidents of the French Revolution, and the attempted escape of the French Royal family, is likely to have been the composition of a man like Mr. M—, who (as we learn from the "Percy Anecdotes") was long in the employ of the Revolutionary party, but withdrew from further connection with them, on account of the murder of the king.

We have next to ask, With what object was the book composed? It is obvious to any reader that certain travellers of celebrity, such as Cook and De Tott, are satirized in it. But they are not sufficiently prominent to make it likely that the work was designed simply to attack them. There is also a widely diffused notion that it was written for the purpose of ridiculing Bruce. This has indeed been alleged by more than one person, whose statements ought to command respect. But it is nevertheless certainly a mistake. Not only is there no reference to Bruce or his adventures in the original work, but it was published fully five years before the appearance of Bruce's Travels. The *second* part of "Baron Munchausen" of which we shall speak presently, no doubt was intended, in a great measure, as an attack on Bruce. But we are now dealing with the first part only—the original composition of Raspé—and his inducement to write it. And strange as such a fact may sound to the reader, it appears that "Baron Munchausen" was, after all, a real person. It is well known that there is a noble Hanoverian family bearing the title of Munchausen, and it appears that in Raspé's time one particular member of it was so notorious for the marvellous stories of his own exploits which he was wont to relate, that he at once suggested

and formed the main feature in the German professor's burlesque. The original compiler had no scruple in saying as much. "Baron Munchausen," he says, "of Bodenwerder near Haweln on the Weser belongs to the noble family of that name." We further learn from the German editor that the nobleman in question was the Herr Karl Friedrich Hieronymus von Munchausen, who had served as a cavalry officer in the Russian [2] service, and passed his latter days on his property at Bodenwerder. "The old officer," says a clergyman, who lived much in the baron's society, "used to relate his own surprising adventures in a cavalier manner, with a military emphasis, but without any passion, and with the easy humour of a man of the world, as though he were speaking of things which required neither explanation or proof."

It is probable that Professor Raspé was, previously to his flight from Cassel, acquainted with this gentleman; and while still residing in that city, compiled for his own and his friends' amusement, his volume of marvellous adventures; though some may have been added after his removal to England. Many of the tales he had probably heard—though, it may be assumed, in a less sensational form—from the old general's own lips, and for the entire collection the baron may have been accounted a suitable godfather. It is not unlikely that he would feel reluctant to publish the book during the old man's lifetime; but after Raspé's death, his friends were not so scrupulous.

Lastly, from what sources are the tales derived? Doubtless these were manifold. Some few may have been of the author's own invention. Such indeed, probably, was the case; as there are some which have never been traced to any previous compilation or tradition. But the greater number are either burlesques of incidents related by well-known travellers, or reproductions of stories told by older writers. It will be interesting to make inquiry about these.

[2] It will be remembered that the original title was "Baron Munchausen's narrative of his marvellous Travels and Campaigns in *Russia*."

The principal authors attacked seem to be Cook,[3] Phipps, Drinkwater, De Tott, and Vaillant—all of them travellers or writers of celebrity in Raspé's time. "The stoppage of the leak" (chapter 7), "The wonderful bird's nest" (chapter 20), and "The kava at the African feast" (chapter 26), are all designed as hits at Cook. Cook had related how that on one occasion his ship, the *Endeavour,* struck on a rock, and a hole was made in her bottom. He patched this, as he supposed, with canvas and oakum, so as to keep her afloat till they reached port. Then it was found that a large fragment of the rock had broken off in the gap, almost closing it up. This story Munchausen travesties by representing *his* ship as springing a leak, and the baron closing it by sitting down in the hole that had been made, until the vessel reached port.

Again, the captain describes an enormous nest which he had seen on an island off the coast of New South Wales. He reports it as being "not less than six-and-twenty feet in circumference, and two feet eight inches high." (Kippis's "Cook," p. 107.) This, in the baron's memoirs, becomes a "kingfisher's nest of prodigious magnitude. It was at least twice the circumference of the dome of St. Paul's!"

In chapter 13 Phipps[4] is attacked. He had related how a walrus, having been fired at by an officer, dived and brought up a number of its companions, which all joined in an attack on the boat. Munchausen relates nearly the same incident (chapter 13), with monstrous additions, and in order to remove all doubt, mentions Phipps by name, with the flattering

[3] James Cook, the son of a Yorkshire labourer, was born A.D. 1728, and went to sea when quite a boy, afterwards entering the navy in 1755. Made captain in 1771, he was frequently employed by the Government in geographical and scientific researches, until his death at Owhyhee, in 1779. He traversed several times a large portion of the globe, discovering among other lands, New South Wales, New Caledonia, and the Sandwich Islands. The history of his voyages has been written by himself with equal ability and modesty, nor did any writer ever less deserve to have his statements questioned and ridiculed.

[4] Constantine John Phipps, the eldest son of an Irish peer, was sent A.D. 1773, on a voyage of discovery to the North Pole, and on his return published a narrative of his adventures. There is nothing very remarkable in them, and they are chiefly remembered now as being connected with Nelson's early career. But there are no grounds, so far as I am aware, for charging the author with either falsehood or exaggeration.

remark that "there is not so complete a bear as he naturally is, among the human species."

Drinkwater,[5] in his "Siege of Gibraltar," mentions two lads who possessed such wonderful keenness of vision, as to be able to distinguish cannon balls in their passage through the air. "It is somewhat singular," he writes, "that the boy should have possessed such uncommon quickness of vision as to see the enemy's shot almost immediately after it quitted the guns. He was not, however, the only one in the garrison possessing this qualification. Another boy of about the same age was as celebrated, if not superior." (Drinkwater, "Siege of Gibraltar.") This the baron burlesques (in chapter 10), by representing himself as not only being able to see the shot come from the cannon, but the exact direction it would take; and accordingly firing a heavier piece of ordnance at the same moment that the enemy discharges his, whereby the cannon balls are struck in mid-air, and driven back on the cannoneers!

Baron de Tott,[6] in the second volume of his memoirs, relates a feat he performed in discharging a huge piece of ordnance, to the amazement and alarm of the spectators. "Munchausen" repeats this story, and then tells a similar adventure of his own, which turns the whole into ridicule. Other instances might be found, but these will suffice.

As regards the other class of tales, which are chiefly taken from older narrators, a great many have been traced to their sources by one writer or another.

The story of the lion and the crocodile in the first chapter

[5] Captain John Drinkwater is the author of the history of the famous Siege of Gibraltar, which took place A.D. 1781. Not much appears to be known about the author, but the book is one of sterling value and high authority. The best historians, as Lord Mahon and others, cite it as the most authentic narrative of the siege. In one or two instances where Drinkwater's statements have been called in question, his accuracy has been fully established.

[6] The Baron de Tott, a foreigner and soldier of fortune in the service of the Sultan. He had a great celebrity in his day, and the memoirs of his travels published in two volumes about a century ago, contain much valuable as well as interesting matter. He too was charged with endeavouring to palm off monstrous inventions as facts; and the author of "Munchausen" has attacked him more bitterly than any other of the travellers he lampoons. It should be added that the groundlessness of the charges against him has been clearly proved.

is taken, almost verbatim, from Purchas's "Pilgrimage," only there it is a tiger, not a lion. A man in a boat is attacked simultaneously by a crocodile and a tiger. He slips out of the way, and the tiger leaps over the boat down the crocodile's throat!

The baron's cloak being seized with madness, in consequence of its being bitten by a dog, is probably designed as a satire on the excessive terror of infection from smallpox, which Hunter's recent discovery of vaccination as a specific against that disease, had stirred up. It was at its height when "Munchausen" was written.

The tale of the horse cut in halves, which, nevertheless, continued to drink, though without satisfying its thirst, as the water continued to pour out at one end as fast as it was taken in at the other—is said to be derived from a Welch legend. The adventure with the wolf, which is forced into the harness of the horse it has just devoured, and compelled to draw the baron's carriage, is a ridiculous version of the method in which the Noquais Indians are said to catch wild horses, as related in De Tott's memoirs. Several more of the stories are to be found in the "Nugæ Venales" of Head; some also in Lucian—as, *e.g.*, the "Adventures in the Moon"—and other ancient writers. Southey reports having found two of them in a Portuguese magazine.

But the most celebrated of all the baron's tales is that of the tunes which were frozen up in the post-horn, and played themselves out in succession, as soon as the horn was placed near the fire. With the general reader "Munchausen" has usually the credit of having invented this extremely amusing conception. But, as a matter of fact, there is none among the "Munchausen" stories which can lay less claim to originality. It is said to be one of the quaint fancies to be found in the writings of Rabelais (LIV. 4, ch. 55, 56). Something very like it, if not the idea itself, is used as an illustration by Jeremy Taylor. It exists in the Spanish and the Italian, and I know not how many more, languages. It is thus told by Head, the author of the "Nugæ Venales."

"A soldier swore desperately that being in the wars between the Russians and Polemon, there chanced to be a parley between the two generals, on a spot where a river parted them. At that time it froze so excessively, that the words were no sooner out of their mouths but they were frozen, and could not be heard till eleven days afterwards, when a thaw came, and the dissolved words made themselves audible to all." ("Nug. Venal." p. 133.)

Mr. Shore gives another version. "A Spanish muleteer told me," he says, "that a Spanish nobleman had travelled to Russia, and vowed to the Virgin a bell, if she would bring him back safe to Spain. He went to a Russian bellmaker, chose a bell, and required to have it rung; but was told that they had been ringing it, but the sound was frozen up. The Don took it to Spain, and hung it up in the steeple, when it gave out tunes for three weeks. This was attributed to the approval of the Virgin."

If anyone would take the trouble, I doubt not he might find a great many more of the baron's marvels in one old writer or another; but most readers would probably consider that the game would hardly be worth the candle.

Thus much of the first issue of "Munchausen"—Raspé's original work. It has already been mentioned that in 1790 another and a greatly enlarged edition was published, swelling the book to very nearly its present bulk. The second part is wholly different both in style and matter from the first, being full of references to the chief political and historical occurrences of the day—such as the campaigns in India and North America, the doings of Catherine of Russia, and the outbreak of the French Revolution. It should be added that this part is not nearly as clever as its predecessor, nor has it attained anything like the same popularity with the reader.

But the writer's chief purpose was not, so far as we can gather, to produce political squibs on the leading events of the day. These seem to have been put in merely for the purpose of filling up the book. The real design of the second part was to satirize Bruce. It has been already shown that the

original work of Raspé had no reference whatever to this celebrated traveller. It is equally certain that the second work was written for the purpose of attacking him.[7] It would seem that the sale of the book after the appearance of the third edition had languished for four or five years, when the issue of Bruce's travels caused such a commotion in the literary world as to induce the proprietors of "Munchausen" to take advantage of it, by publishing another edition, ridiculing the great Abyssinian traveller, at that time the object of almost universal attention. It will be better to begin another chapter with some account of him and of the adventures which had called forth such an outburst of scorn and indignation, and in particular drew down on him the satire of "Munchausen" redivivus.[8]

[7] To prevent all possibility of mistake on the subject, the book was dedicated to Bruce in the following terms:—

"Humbly dedicated to Mr. Bruce, the Abyssinian traveller, as the baron conceives it may be of some service to him, previously to his making another expedition into Abyssinia. But, if this advice does not delight Mr. Bruce, the baron is willing to fight him in any way he pleases." This last sentence is a satire on Bruce's notorious heat of temper, which induced him to fasten quarrels on any one who crossed his fancy, or disputed his veracity.

[8] See chapter 25 of "Munchausen." "Having passed over the nearest mountains, we entered a delightful vale, where we perceived a multitude of persons at a feast of living bulls, whose flesh they cut away with great knives, making a table of the creature's carcase, serenaded by the bellowing of the unfortunate animal."

Chapter XI

Bruce—Huc—Livingstone—Moody—Gordon Cumming—Du Chaillu

JAMES BRUCE was a man of good family, and was born at Kinnaird House, in the county of Stirling, in 1730. His family claimed to trace their descent from the hero of Bannockburn, and had been for many generations in possession of their ancestral seat. He was educated at Harrow, and afterwards studied at the university of Edinburgh. In 1758 he succeeded to the family property; and the idea of Eastern travel, for which his knowledge of oriental languages especially qualified him, took possession of his fancy. When the consulship of Algiers was offered him in 1762, he gladly accepted it. After holding it for a year, he resigned the office, and having obtained credentials from the Dey, set out on his travels. In the course of these he visited Egypt, Nubia, and Abyssinia, remaining abroad until 1774, when he returned to England. His travels were not published for sixteen years afterwards, and (it is said) would not have seen the light even then, but for a severe domestic sorrow, which induced him to seek consolation in literary employment. No doubt, however, another cause of the long delay in their publication was the spirit of incredulity they called forth in the society where Bruce recounted his experiences. There is a famous story told of a party, at which Bruce and Dr. Johnson were present. One of the company having asked the traveller whether the Abyssinians possessed musical instruments, Bruce replied,

"I think I saw one *lyre* when I was in Abyssinia." On which another of the company remarked *sotto voce* to his neighbour, "There is one *liar* the fewer there anyway, now that he has left it." It is fortunate for this gentleman that he *did* speak *sotto voce,* or the consequences might have been unpleasant to himself, as the reader will acknowledge, when he reads another anecdote which will presently be related of Bruce. But the remark represented, pretty accurately, the general opinion entertained about him.

At all events the appearance of his book called forth a perfect yell of incredulity. Dr. Clark tells us that "Soon after the publication of Bruce's travels, several copies of the work were sold as waste paper, in consequence of the calumnies circulated against the author's veracity." It must in fairness to Dr. Clark be remarked, that he adds, "There has not been an example in the annals of literature of more unfair and disgraceful hostility, than that levelled against the writings of Bruce." Dr. Johnson told Sir John Hawkins that when he first conversed with Bruce, the Abyssinian traveller, he was very much inclined to believe that he had been in the countries he described, but that he had afterwards altered his opinion. In the "Gentleman's Magazine" for 1791, a writer says, "It is universally known that doubts have been entertained, whether Bruce ever was in Abyssinia." The Baron De Tott—whose personal experience of the calumnies to which travellers are subject, might have taught him wisdom—if not charity, was ungenerous enough to write: "A traveller named Bruce has pretended to discover them (the sources of the Nile). I saw at Cairo the servant who was his companion and guide during the journey, who assured me that he knew nothing of any such discovery."

Let us in the next place consider what the statements were which provoked such general incredulity. We find that in the first place his descriptions of the climate of Abyssinia, and expecially the ravages made by the ants, were disbelieved. Again, it was stated that, although he professed to have discovered the source of the Blue Nile, he had never really been

thither—there were also one or two similar objections to his veracity raised, by one reviewer or another. But it was, no doubt, mainly the story he tells of the slices cut from the body of a living ox, on the occasion of one of his journeys, and the same incident again narrated in the description of the barbaric feast, later on in his book, which caused the attack on his truthfulness. Here is the account of this affair, given in his own words.

"Not long after our losing sight of the ancient capital of Abyssinia," he writes, "we overtook three travellers, driving a cow before them. They had black goat-skins on their shoulders, and lances and shields in their hands. In other respects they were but thinly clothed. They appeared to be soldiers. Soon after, we arrived at the hither-most part of the river, where I thought we were to pitch our tent. The driver suddenly tripped up the cow, and gave the poor animal a very rude fall on the ground, which was but the beginning of her sufferings. One of them sat across her neck, holding down her head by the horns. The other twisted the halter about her forehead, while the third, who had a knife in his hand, to my very great surprise, instead of taking her by the throat, got astride upon her belly before her hind-legs, and gave her a very deep wound."

Bruce imagined that they intended to kill the cow, and offered to purchase a portion of the carcase; but they answered that they were not going to kill her, and that they could not sell her, because she was not wholly their property. "This," says Bruce, "awakened my curiosity. I let my people go forward, and stayed behind myself, until I saw, with the utmost astonishment, two pieces, thicker and longer than our ordinary beefsteaks, cut out of the higher part of the buttock of the beast. How this was done I cannot possibly say, because, judging that the cow was to be killed, from the moment I saw the knife drawn, I was not anxious to view that catastrophe, which was by no means an object of curiosity. In whatever way it was done, it was certainly adroitly, and the two pieces were spread upon the outside of one of their

shields. This, too, was not done in an ordinary manner. The skin, which had covered the flesh that was taken away, was left entire and flapped over the wound and was fastened to the corresponding part by two or more skewers or pins. Whether they had put anything under the skin, between that and the wounded flesh, I cannot say. But at the river side where they were, they had prepared a cataplasm of clay, with which they covered the wound. They then forced the animal to rise, and drove it before them to furnish them with a fuller meal, when they should meet their companions in the evening."

The second narrative of a nearly similar occurrence is found in Vol. IV. p. 482 of his works, when he is describing the famous banquet of the Abyssinians. The latter is, indeed, more shocking and unnatural than that already given. It represents cows or bulls—one or more, according to the number of the company—being brought to the door of the banquet room, where they are strongly secured. The whole of the flesh is then cut off from some parts of the animals, and carried in to be eaten raw by the banqueters. This is repeated until the animal bleeds to death. These statements called forth a burst of mingled incredulity and ridicule. Dr. Woolcott refers to it in one of his satires:—

> "Nor have I been where men (what loss, alas!)
> Kill half a cow and turn the rest to grass!" [1]

It was also probably in burlesque of this tale, that Captain Marryat in his earliest novel, "Frank Mildmay," (written before Bruce's accuracy was fully vindicated) puts the following monstrous assertion into the mouth of one of his sea captains. "What does he do?"—the captain is made to

[1] The attacks upon Bruce, it should be remarked, represent him throughout as meaning to imply that the cow from which the steaks were cut was intended to be kept alive, to supply a continual series of beefsteaks—new flesh growing in the place of that which had been cut away! But there is not a shadow of ground for supposing Bruce to have intended this. On the contrary, nothing is plainer than that the cow was to be kept alive for an hour or two only, until the men reached their destination, and then she was straightway to be slaughtered.

say—"but he catches salmon, and puts them into tanks, and every day adds more and more salt, until the water was as thick as gruel, and the fish could hardly wag their tails in it. Then he threw in whole pepper-corns, half-a-dozen pounds at a time, till there was enough. Then he began to dilute it with vinegar, until his pickle was complete. The fish did not half like it at first, but habit is everything, and when he showed me his tank, they were swimming about as merry as a shoal of dace. He whipped one of them out with a landing net, and when I stuck my knife into him the pickle ran out of his body like wine out of a claret bottle, and I eat at least two pounds of the rascal, while he flapped his tail in my face."

The public incredulity respecting these statements of Bruce rendered him highly indignant, and as he was both a hot-tempered man and very large and powerfully built, it was by no means safe to venture upon any expressions of unbelief in his presence. One gentleman had very unpleasant experience of this fact. He had ventured to tell Bruce that it was impossible anyone could eat raw flesh. Bruce made no reply, but he left the room, returning presently with a raw beefsteak on a plate. "Sir," he said, "you will either eat that beefsteak, or you will take the consequences." The gentleman remonstrated in vain. Bruce was peremptory, and he was compelled to swallow down the whole of the meat. "Now, sir," said the traveller, "you will, at all events, never affirm again that it is impossible to eat raw meat."

Bruce's accuracy on this point has long been established. Nathaniel Pearce, who resided in Abyssinia from 1810 till 1819, says that the people eat their meat raw, and prefer it cut off from the animal, while it is still quivering under the knife. Dofter Esther, a learned man, who had studied at Gondar, when questioned by Salt, the traveller, respecting this story, stated that he had heard of this practice, and believed it was true. Lord Valentia and others have also confirmed the statement, which may now be said to have received general credit. Indeed it is all the more hard upon Bruce that he should have been accused of falsehood on this point, since

he is not by any means the first traveller who reported the existence of the practice. Father Lobo, the very writer whom Dr. Johnson contrasted with Bruce as being trustworthy, where the other was mendacious, reports precisely the same practice. He writes, "Their (the Abyssinians') greatest regale is a piece of raw beef, brought in reeking warm from the beast." (See "Universal History," Vol. XII., p. 113).

Leaving Bruce and his times, we may, in conclusion, proceed to our own. To the honour of the present generation it must be allowed that no traveller has experienced anything like the injustice at its hands, which Bruce and some of his predecessors underwent. But there has been no lack of wonderful stories, nor have the narrators of them, notwithstanding their high character, always escaped detraction and suspicion. Here is a tale, to the full as wonderful as any related by Odoric or Maundeville. It describes some of the doings of the Lamas of Thibet. "When the appointed hour has arrived, the whole multitude of pilgrims repair to the great court of the Lama convent, where an altar is erected. At length the Bokte makes his appearance. He advances gravely amid the acclamations of the crowd, seats himself on the altar, and taking a cutlass from his girdle, places it between his knees, while the crowd of Lamas, ranged in a circle at his feet, commence the terrible invocations that prelude this frightful ceremony. By degrees, as they proceed in their recitation, the Bokte is seen to tremble in every limb, and gradually to fall into strong convulsions. Then the song of the Lamas becomes wilder and more animated, and the recitation is exchanged for cries and howlings. Suddenly the Bokte flings away the scarf which he has worn, snatches off his girdle, and with the sacred cutlass rips himself entirely open. As the blood gushes out the multitude prostrate themselves before the horrible spectacle, and the sufferer is immediately interrogated concerning future events, and things concealed from human knowledge. His answers to all these questions are regarded as oracles.

"As soon as the devout curiosity of the pilgrims is satis-

fied, the Lamas resume their recitations and prayers, and the Bokte taking up in his right hand a quantity of his blood carries it to his mouth, blows three times upon it, and casts it into the air with a loud cry. He then passes his hand rapidly over his stomach, and it becomes as whole as it was before, without the slightest trace being left of this diabolical operation, with the exception of an extreme lassitude.

"Besides this opening of the stomach, other exploits of a similar character are exhibited. Pieces of iron are made red hot in the fire, and then licked by some of the Lamas with impunity. Others will make incisions in the body, and a moment afterwards not a trace of them is to be seen.

"We cannot think that all facts of this nature are to be set down to fraud; for after all that we have seen and heard among idolatrous nations, we are persuaded that Satan plays an important part in them, and our opinion is confirmed by that of the best instructed Buddhists with whom we have conversed on the subject." (Huc's "Journey through Tartary, Thibet and China, 1852,' p. 118.)

The agency by which these extraordinary results are produced, is a question open to dispute. Those who have witnessed the marvels of Indian jugglery will probably think that the (apparent) miracles may be produced without supposing the intervention of Satan. But there can be no reasonable doubt that Huc saw all that he has recorded.

Here again is an adventure which, but for the unimpeachable character of the narrator, might have been classed with those of the "Baron."

"We found some lions upon a small hill, about a quarter of a mile in length, and covered with trees. A circle of men was formed around it, ascending pretty near to each other. Being down below in the plain with a native schoolmaster named Mebalwe, I saw one of the lions sitting upon a piece of rock, within the now closed-up circle of men. Mebalwe fired at him before I could, and the ball struck the rock on which the animal was sitting. He bit at the spot struck, as

a dog does at a stick or a stone thrown at him, then leaping away, he broke through the opening circle, and escaped unhurt. The men were afraid to attack him, perhaps on account of their belief in witchcraft. When the circle was reformed, we saw two other lions in it, but were afraid to fire, lest we should strike the men, and they allowed the beasts to burst through also. If the Bakatta had acted according to the custom of the country, they would have speared the lions in their attempts to get out. Seeing we could not get them to attempt to kill one of the lions, we bent our steps to the village. In going round the end of the hill, however, I saw one of the beasts sitting upon a piece of rock as before, but this time he had a little bush in front. Being about thirty yards off, I took a good aim at his body through the bush, and fired both barrels into it. The men then called out: 'He is shot, he is shot!' Others cried: 'He has been shot by another man too, let us go to him.' I did not see anyone else shoot at him, but I saw the lion's tail erected in anger behind the bush, and turning to the people, I said, 'Stop, and I will load again.' When in the act of ramming the bullets down, I heard a shout. Starting and looking half round, I saw the lion just in the act of springing on me. I was upon a little height. He caught my shoulder as he sprang, and we both came to the ground below together. Growling horribly close to my ear, he shook me as a terrier dog shakes a rat. The shock produced a stupor, similar to that which seems to be felt by a mouse, after the first shake of the cat. It caused a sort of dreaminess, in which there was no sense of pain or feeling of terror, though quite conscious of all that was happening. It was like what patients under the influence of chloroform, describe, who see all the operation, but feel not the knife. Turning round to relieve myself of the weight, as he had one paw on the back of my head, I saw his eyes directed to Mebalwe, who was trying to shoot him at a distance of ten or fifteen yards. His gun, a flint one, missed fire in both barrels. The lion immediately left me, and attacking Mebalwe, bit his thigh. Another man, whose life I had saved before, after he

had been tossed by a buffalo, attempted to spear the lion, while he was biting Mebalwe. He left Mebalwe, and caught this man by the shoulder. But at that moment, the bullets he had received took effect, and he fell down dead." (Livingstone's "Travels," chap. I.)

Lieutenant Moody records an escape, from an elephant this time, almost as wonderful. He had been told of a herd of elephants being in the neighbourhood, set off to join the hunters, but before he could reach them, he heard the crashing of the jungle, and a whole drove of elephants, led by a female of towering bulk, bore down upon him. The lieutenant thought it most prudent to beat a retreat, but on looking back, he saw with horror and despair, that the herd had altered their course, and were in full pursuit of him, the female leading the way. He redoubled his exertions, and seeing a stream before him, he rushed towards it in the hope of finding an asylum among the rocks that lined the opposite side. Before he could do this, the huge beasts were upon him. The lieutenant turned, shouldered his rifle, and fired at the female leader. The ball struck her head, and glanced off like a bullet from a wall.

She immediately charged: the lieutenant fell, whether struck by her trunk or not, he could never say. She thrust at him with her tusk—she had only one—but luckily she missed him. She then caught him with her trunk about the waist, flung him beneath her fore-feet, and for a minute or so knocked him about like a ball. Once she pressed her foot on his chest so heavily, that he could feel his bones as it were bending beneath the weight; and once she trod on the middle of his arm, which fortunately lay flat on the ground at the time. He never lost his presence of mind, or he would probably have perished: but owing probably to the roundness of the elephant's foot, he contrived by a nimble management of his body to escape her direct tread. His comrades now came up, and firing a few shots at her, one of which hit her in the shoulder, she suddenly abandoned her intended victim, giving him a kick or two with her hind-feet as she left him. Astonish-

ing to say, he was not seriously injured. (Moody's "South Africa.")

Marvellous as these encounters may appear, those of Mr. Gordon Cumming are at least equally wonderful. Here is a struggle with a still more formidable animal: "As I was examining the spoor of the game, I suddenly detected a rock-snake stealing into a crevice beneath a mass of rock beside me. He was truly an enormous reptile. Never having before

dealt with these species of game, I did not exactly know how to set about capturing him. Being very anxious to preserve his skin entire, and not wishing to have recourse to my rifle, I cut a tough and stout stick, about 8 feet long, and commenced the attack.

"Seizing him by the tail, I tried to get him out of his place of refuge, but we (he and his servant) hauled in vain. The serpent only drew his large folds firmer together. At length I got a rheim round the middle of his body, and Kleinborg and I pulled away in good earnest. The snake, now finding the ground too hot for him, relaxed his coils, and suddenly bringing his head to the front, sprang out at us with his immense and hideous mouth open to its largest dimensions. Before I could get out of his way, he was clean out of his

hole, and made a second spring, throwing himself forward about 8 or 10 feet, and snapping his horrid fangs within a foot of my naked legs. I was not long in jumping out of his way, and getting hold of the green bough I had cut, returned to the charge.

"The reptile now glided along at top speed for a mass of broken rocks, where he would have been beyond my reach. But before he could gain these, I caught him two or three tremendous whacks on the head. He, however, held on for a pool of muddy water, which he was rapidly crossing, when I again belaboured him, and at length brought him to a standstill. We then hanged him by the neck to the bough of a tree, and afterwards skinned him." (Gordon Cumming, p. 281.)

His adventure with a hippopotamus—a waltz he calls it—if not so perilous, is more amusing: "In a broad part of the stream there were three cows and an old bull hippopotamus. Although alarmed, they did not appear to be aware of the extent of the impending danger. I took the cow next to me, and with my first ball gave her a mortal wound, knocking loose the great plate at the top of her skull. She commenced plunging round and round, and then occasionally remained still, sitting for a few moments on the same spot. On hearing the report of my rifle, two of the others took the water up stream, and the fourth dashed down the river, trotting along at a smart pace, like oxen, as long as the water was shallow. I was now in a state of very great anxiety about my wounded sea-cow, for I feared that she would get into deep water, and be lost like the last two. To settle the matter, therefore, I fired a second shot from the bank, which entering the roof of her skull, passed out through her eye; after which she kept constantly splashing round and round in a circle in the middle of the river. I had great fears of the crocodiles; and did not know whether the sea-cow might not attack me. My anxiety to secure her, however, overcame all hesitation, so divesting myself of my leathers, and armed with a sharp

knife, I dashed into the water, which at first took me up to my armpits, but the middle was shallower.

"As I approached Behemoth, I halted for a moment, ready to dive under the water if she attacked me. But though her eye looked very wicked, she was stunned and did not know what she was doing. So running in upon her and seizing her short tail, I attempted to incline her course to land. It was extraordinary strength she still had in the water. I could not guide her in the slightest degree, and she continued to plunge, splash and blow, and make her circular course, carrying me along with her, as if I was a fly on her tail. Finding this gave me but a poor hold, I took out my knife and as the only means of securing her, cut two deep parallel incisions through the skin on her stern, and lifting this skin from the flesh so that I could get it into my two hands, I made use of it as a handle, and after some desperate hard work, sometimes pushing and sometimes pulling, the sea-cow continuing her circular course all the time, and I holding on like grim death, eventually succeeded in bringing this gigantic and most powerful animal to the bank. My bushman now brought me a stout buffalo rheim from my horse's neck, which I passed through the opening in the thick skin, and moored Behemoth to a tree. I then sent a ball through the middle of her head, and she was numbered with the dead." (Gordon Cumming's "Travels.")

The humanity of this act, as well as of some others, which occur in the course of Mr. Gordon Cumming's pages, may be questioned; and further, as a Scottish reviewer remarks, "If we did not know Mr. Cumming to be a veritable Scotchman of ancient family, and if we had not the very best proof of his veracity in the spoils he is now exhibiting in London, we should have been disposed to trace some very close family connection between him and Baron Munchausen."

One more modern traveller who was assailed with doubt and ridicule when he first published his discoveries, but whose veracity has been as fully vindicated as that of any of his aspersed brethren—M. du Chaillu—ought to find a place in

this chapter. Here is his narrative of a most truly strange and interesting discovery in natural history.

"As I was trudging along rather tired of the sport, I happened to look up at a high tree which we were passing, and saw a most singular looking shelter built in its branches. I asked Okabi whether the hunters here had the habit of sleeping in the woods, and was told to my surprise that this very ingenious hut was built by the nshiego nbousé, an ape as I found afterwards, which I had put in the genus Troglodytes, and called *Troglodytes calvus,* because it had no hair on its head—so Okabi told me.

"I saw at once that I was on the trail of an animal till now unknown to the civilised world. A naturalist will appreciate the joy which filled me at this good fortune. I saw many of these nests after this, and may as well say here that they are generally built about 15 or 20 feet from the ground, and invariably on a tree which stands a little apart from the others, and has no limbs below the one on which the nest is placed. I have seen them at the height of 50 feet, but very seldom. The choice is probably made that they may be safe at night from beasts, serpents, and falling timber. They build only in the loneliest parts of the forest, and are very shy, being seldom seen even by the negroes.

"Okabi, who was an old and intelligent hunter, was able to tell me that the male and female together gather the materials for their nests. This material consists of leafy branches, with which to make the roof, and vines to tie these branches to the tree. The tying is done so neatly, and the roof is so well constructed, that until I saw the nshiego actually occupying his habitation, I could scarce persuade myself that human hands had not built it. It throws off the rain perfectly, being neatly rounded at the top for this purpose. The material being collected, the male goes up and builds the nest, while the female brings him branches and vines. The male and female do not occupy the same tree, but have nests not far apart. From all I have observed I judge that the nshiego is not gregarious. The nests are never found in companies,

and I have seen even quite solitary nests occupied by nshiegos whose silvery hair and worn teeth attested their great age. They live on wild berries, and build their houses where they find these. When they have consumed all that a particular spot affords, they remove and build new houses, so that a nest is not inhabited for more than eight or ten days."—(Du Chaillu, chap. xiv).

I might multiply quotations to any extent, but the above are, I think, sufficient to illustrate the truth of the remarks made at the outset of the work as to the "Travellers' Tales" of every age and people.

STRANGE CUSTOMS

Chapter XII

The Amazons—Cannibalism

We have now completed the first part of our subject—the notice, that is to say, of those travellers, in ancient and modern times, whose assertions have been branded as untruths, or at least received with incredulity. We pass on to the second part of it, topics, that is to say, of general interest, respecting which travellers and others have reported—what seem, at all events, to the general reader—strange and marvellous things. These may be summed up under the following heads: strange customs, strange men (giants, dwarfs, or monsters), strange beasts, birds, fishes, reptiles, insects, and plants. Upon all these subjects "Travellers' Tales" in abundance have been told; which—like those already dealt with—contain generally a considerable substratum of truth, intermingled with errors; caused partly by the ignorance of the narrators, partly by their superstitious fancies, partly—it must be owned—by their anxiety to provoke the alarm, or the admiration, of their hearers.

And first of strange customs, imputed to various nations. Among these it may safely be said that there is none so extraordinary as that which is attributed, by one writer after another, to certain races of Asia, Africa, and America—the practice of living in two communities—the men and the women—apart from each other, only meeting for a brief interval in every year.

Strabo, Diodorus, Justin and others represent them as oc-

cupying the country between the base of the chain of Caucasus and the shores of the Euxine. The women were known by the name of Amazons, the men by that of Gargareans. The former had their own laws and customs, and were entirely under the rule of their own queen. The youthful virgins were trained to bear their part in the chase and in the battlefield. Some of them wore armour, and carried shields of a crescent shape; others were equipped with bows, and in order that they might draw these without impediment, they were said to cut off the right breast. They were a martial race, and in very ancient time are said to have invaded Lycia and Phrygia; the latter at the time when Priam had recently succeeded to the throne of Troy. Afterwards they marched, under the leadership of Penthesilea, to the assistance of the Trojans; but the Amazonian queen was slain in battle by Achilles, who is said to have bitterly repented the deed when he beheld her corpse. Pausanias and Plutarch also relate that they made an incursion into Attica, but were encountered and defeated by Theseus. The deeds of the Amazons form a distinguished feature in Greek sculpture; the pediments and entablatures of several of the temples being adorned with bas-reliefs representing their deeds, executed by some of the most celebrated of the Greek sculptors. It is certainly a fact, however strange it may appear, that the Greek and Latin historians assign a real historical status to this extraordinary people. Strabo, Justin, and Curtius relate that when Alexander the Great advanced into Asia, Thalestris, the Queen of the Amazons at that time, came with three hundred of her female warriors to meet him.

Their relations to their husbands, the Gargareans, is described by the writers to whom we have already referred. Once a year they met them in the defiles of Caucasus. Whatever children resulted from the union, if female, were brought up by their mothers, and became part of the nation; if male, were, after a certain time, sent to the Gargareans, or put to death. Herodotus has a story, that after their defeat by the Athenians, a large number of the Amazons were captured

and carried off in three vessels by the Greeks. But they rose against their captors, and slew them. Unable to navigate the ships, they were thrown ashore at Cerne, on the Palus Mæotis (Sea of Azof). Here they fell in with the Scythians, whom they ultimately accepted as their husbands, requiring them, however, to settle in a new land, beyond the Tanais. Thus was the nation of the Sauromatæ formed, in which the women took part in all the pursuits of the men, hunted with them in the forests, and went out to battle in their company—in which also no virgin was permitted to marry, until she had slain a man in war. This tale may explain the peculiar habits of the Sauromatæ; but it is, obviously, no explanation of the origin of the Amazons. (Herod. iv. 110, 116.)

Marignoldi and Marco Polo could have known very little of Herodotus and Strabo; yet the story of a female kingdom, in which, not the sovereign only, but all the chief officers were women, is repeated by the old Minorite; while Polo not only narrates the same fact, but adds a number of particulars which accord almost entirely with the statements of the Greek and Latin authors: the only difference being that he locates them not on the Thermodon, or the Tanais, but in two islands near Socotra, which he calls the "Male" and "Female islands."

"When you leave the kingdom of Kesmacoran (the province of Mekran in Beloochistan)," he writes, "you go by sea some five hundred miles towards the south, and then you find the two islands, Male and Female, lying about thirty miles distant from one another.

"In the island which is called Male, dwell the men alone, without their wives, or any other women. Every year, when the month of March arrives, the men all set out for the other island, and tarry there for three months, to wit, March, April, and May, dwelling with their wives for that space. At the end of those three months they return to their own island, and pursue their husbandry and trade for the other nine months.

"As for the children which their wives bear to them, if they be girls, they abide with their mothers; but if they be

boys, the mothers bring them up till they are fourteen, and then send them to their fathers." (Marco Polo, II. 338.)

The same tale is told by a multitude of other writers, with a few slight variations. "It is not of much use," truly remarks Colonel Yule, "to attempt to identify the locality of these islands. The fable ran from time immemorial; and as nobody ever found the islands, their locality shifted with the horizon, though the legend long hung about Socotra and its vicinity." Friar Jordanus says they lay between India the greater and India Tertia (by which latter phrase he means Eastern Africa). Conti places them not more than five miles from Socotra, and yet one hundred miles distant from one another. "Sometimes," he says, "the men pass over to the women, and sometimes the women pass over to the men, and each return to their own respective island before the expiration of six months. Those who remain on the island of the others beyond this fatal period, die immediately." (Conti, p. 21.)

Palladius tells much the same story of the Brahmins, only he substitutes two opposite banks of a river for two separate islands. "The men," he says, "lived on one side of the Ganges, and the women on the other. The husbands visited their wives, for forty days only, in June, July, and August, those being the cold months, as the sun was then in the north. When a wife had once borne a child, the husband returned no more."

Another writer declares the islands to exist in the vicinity of Japan. He expresses himself very doubtful as to the truth of the stories which have been told him, "although he has been certified by religious men that have talked with persons that, within these two years, have been at the said islands, and seen the said women."

Sir John Maundeville (it is hardly necessary to say), has his tale to tell, though the locality he assigns is somewhat different. "Beside the land of Chaldæa," he writes, "is the land of Amazonia, which is all women and no men—not, as some men say, because men may not live there, but because the

women will not suffer men among them to be their sovereigns." He adds that "this land of Amazonia is an island, surrounded by the sea, except in two places"—a novel description of an island, by the way—"where are two entrances, and beyond the water dwell the men, who are their husbands, who go to them when they will."

All the above writers place the Amazons in some part of Asia; but they were to be found in Africa also. According to Diodorus, these latter were by far the more ancient race.

He says they had dwelt in their African homes long previously to the Trojan war. Rawlinson thinks that the name Amazon is probably of African origin. The same belief was current in comparatively modern times. Alvarez, who visited Abyssinia, in 1520, speaks of a race of Amazons, south of Damot, who were "war-like, and fought with bows and arrows, mounted on bullocks. They destroy the left breast when young. They live with their husbands; but are governed only by a queen. The men have nothing to do with war." ("Penny Cyclopædia," "Amazon;" "Univers. Hist." XIII, p. 387.)

It is most strange to find these ancient myths and legends transferred to the New World, the inhabitants of which could not, by possibility, have heard so much as a hint of them.

Yet such was the case. Columbus was told by the Indians of an island, which they called Matitino, and which he discovered in the course of his second voyage. They assured him that it was inhabited wholly by women, who, at a certain time of the year, were visited by the Caribs. If the children born to these were boys, they were brought up to a certain age, and sent to their fathers; if girls, they were retained by their mothers. They reported also that these women had certain subterraneous caves, in which they would take refuge and hide themselves, if men came to the island at any other than the appointed season.

Francisco Orellana, the second in command under Pizarro, reported on his return to Spain after his voyage down the Maranon, that he had met with a republic of women, on the banks of that river; and Condamine, after a careful examination of the question, considers that there is good ground for believing in the existence of a community of armed women, once living somewhere in the neighbourhood of the Amazon, though they have now disappeared. (Prescott "Peru," p. 150.)

Sir W. Raleigh made this question his particular study. "I made inquirie," he writes, "among the most ancient and best travelled of the Oranoqueponi, and I had knowledge of all the rivers between the Orinoco and the Amazon, and was very anxious to understand the truth about these warlike women, because of some it is believed, of others not. And though I digress from my purpose, yet I will set down that which has been delivered to me for truth of these women. I spoke with a Cacique, a lord of the people, who told me that he had been on the river, and beyond it also. The nations of those women are on the south side of that river, and their chief strengths are in the island situated on the south side of the entrance, some sixty leagues within the mouth of the said river."

Raleigh then mentions the habits, &c., ascribed to the Amazons by the classical writers, and adds: "But they which are not far from Guiana, do keep company with men but once a

year, and for the time of one month; which I gather, by their relation, to be April. At that time all the kings of the borders assemble, and the Queens of the Amazons, and after the queens have chosen their husbands, the rest cast lots for theirs. This one month they feast, dance, sing, and drink wine in abundance; and the moon being done they all return to their own provinces. If a son be born to them, they return him to his father, and if a daughter, they nourish and keep it. But that they cut off their breasts, I do not find to be true. It was further told me that, if in war they took any prisoners, although they might be old acquaintances, after a while they put him to death; for they are said to be very cruel and bloodthirsty, especially to such as offer to invade their territories." (Raleigh, "Disc. Guiana," pp. 24, 25).

Such is the testimony, ancient and modern, on this strange subject. It is natural to ask what could have been the origin of the story, and who and what these Amazons really were. That there must be a foundation for a belief so widely spread will, it is presumed, be conceded. There have been, beyond doubt, under certain special circumstances, communities composed wholly of women. Such was the case in Lemnos after the massacre of all the men in the island. This is related chiefly by the poets and has doubtless received a good deal of poetical embellishment, but the main fact is almost certainly true. The reports of so strange a condition of things could not but spread far, and excite remark. It is indeed to an occurrence of this kind, that Justin assigns the origin of the Amazons. Some Scythians, he tells us, settled on the banks of the Thermodon, and grew gradually into a nation. A war with their neighbours ensued, in which they were worsted and almost exterminated. Their women came to the rescue, took up arms and succeeded in driving off their assailants. They are said then to have resolved to live without men, who had proved themselves so unworthy to be their masters, and to have slain such of the male sex as still remained among them, thenceforth only permitting the occasional visits, but not the

habitual presence of the men.[1] It is certain again, that in some nations the women share in the hardier pursuits of the men and even hold a position independent of them. "The Zaporay Cossacks, (we are told,) do not live with the women, as is usual in other countries, but each forms a separate community. The villages of the women are governed by an Attaman, and they (the women) are forbidden on pain of death to come to the residence of the men. Four women always live together in the same hut. If a man falls in love with a girl, he is allowed to marry her, but he loses all right to share in the produce of the chase, and is obliged to till the land." Travellers in the ninth and eleventh centuries report that in the Ladrones and Maldives the government was held almost exclusively by women. By some of the African races, again, women are regarded with the greatest reverence, and the most important offices are committed to them. "The numerous body-guard of the King of the Behrs on the White Nile," writes Rawlinson, "is composed entirely of women. All orders and edicts are conveyed through them. These customs, so opposed to the ordinary habits of mankind, may at once have originated and helped to give currency to the popular tradition of the Amazons."

Another strange, and not only strange, but shocking and unnatural, custom is that of Cannibalism. This too is very ancient. It was in existence when human authorship first began. Homer represents Polyphemus as devouring human flesh. Herodotus declares that the Massagetæ, the Issedones, the Padæi, and many other nations, habitually practised it. It has been thought by some, that,—as it is almost invariably the most remote nations (whose history is, for the most part, only known through hearsay) to whom this practice is ascribed—there is no sufficient ground for believing that it ever was in use among any people, unless when the extremity

[1] The Lacedæmonians, during the protracted siege of Ithome (B.C. 743), seemed to have been reduced to a condition like that of the Scythians above described. (Diodorus, xv. p. 378.)

of hunger may have driven them to it. This is so far true, that the charge has often been brought without sufficient reason. At one period of history—in the dark and middle ages—it was the fashion for almost all nations to believe it of their enemies, especially when these belonged to races widely differing from themselves. When the Lombards invaded Italy, the inhabitants were overcome with terror at the notion, that they would not only be conquered and taken prisoners in battle, but devoured afterwards by their barbarous captors. The crusaders were persuaded that the Saracens made their repast on the bodies of the Christians they had slain; nor were the Saracens behindhand in imputing the same abomination to the Christians. In the romance of Richard Cœur de Lion, the king is represented as feasting with especial relish on the head of a Turk. Richard himself is made to say:—

> "There is no flesh so nourrisant
> Unto an Englishman,
> Partridge, plover, heron, ne swan,
> Cow, ne ox, sheep ne swine,
> As the head of a Saracen!"

Fully four centuries afterwards, the Roundheads believed that the Cavaliers relished no dish so much, as the flesh of children. Doubtless this calumny was put forward by persons who did not themselves believe it, after the same unscrupulous fashion still practised in election cries and placards, but there is the fact that the populace credited it. Nay, it is even said that as late as 1814, the women in France, during the time when the English army was advancing on Paris, were wont to frighten their children by representing the Duke of Wellington as an ogre, who every day devoured naughty children!

But setting aside idle fancies like these, there is only too clear proof that the practice has prevailed, from very ancient times, even down to the present, among a great variety of nations. The evidence of Homer and Herodotus has already been cited, that of Strabo, Pliny, Tibullus, Ptolemy, Solinus,

and many others might be added. It is not different when we come to mediæval travellers.

"I landed at a certain great island," says Friar Odoric, "which is called Dondin. They who dwell in that island are an evil generation who devour raw flesh, and every other kind of filth. They have also an abominable custom; for the father will eat the son, the son the father, the wife will eat the husband, the husband the wife."

Again, while in the country of Lamori, (supposed to be part of Sumatra) he says, "Merchants come to this island from far, bringing children with them to sell like cattle to those infidels, who buy and slaughter them in the shambles, and eat them."

Marco Polo says of the inhabitants of Java the less (Sumatra), "The hill people live for all the world like beasts and eat human flesh, as well as all other kinds of flesh, clean or unclean." (Marco Polo II. 227.)

And again "When you leave the kingdom of Samara, you come to another which is called Dagroian. I will tell you a wicked custom of theirs. When one of them is ill they send for their sorcerers, and put the question to them whether the sick man shall recover of his sickness or no. If they say he will recover, then they let him alone till he gets better. But if the sorcerers foretell that the sick man is to die, the friends send for some judges of theirs to put to death him, who has thus been condemned by the sorcerers to die. These men come and lay upon the sick man's mouth so many clothes that they suffocate him. And when he is dead they have him cooked, and gather together all the dead man's kin and eat him." (Marco Polo, II. 236.)

Maundeville gives very nearly the same evidence. "If it so befall that the father or mother or any of their friends are sick, the son goes to the priest of their law, and prays him to ask the idol if his father or mother or friend shall die. And then the priest and the son go before the idol, and kneel full devoutly and ask of the idol, and if the devil, that is within, answer that he shall live, they keep him well: and if he say

that he shall die, then the priest and the son go with the wife of him that is sick, and they put their hands upon his mouth, and stop his breath and so kill him. And after that they chop the body in small pieces, and pray all his friends to come and eat: and they send for all the minstrels of the country and make a solemn feast. And when they have eaten the flesh, they take the bones and bury them, and send and make great melody." (Maundeville, p. 228.)

A great number of other travellers give independent testimony of the same kind to the wide-spread prevalence of the custom in various parts of the Malay Archipelago, and adjacent lands, which modern experience has fully confirmed. When America was discovered, it was found that this horrible practice prevailed not here and there, among a few peculiarly savage tribes, but almost everywhere,—in the Southern Continent, in the islands of the Caribbean Sea, and in various parts of Northern America. Their very language, Robertson remarks, bears evidence to the general adoption of the custom. If they declare war, they express their resolution of "going and *eating* that nation." If they solicit the aid of a neighbouring tribe, they invite it "to eat broth made of the flesh of their enemies," and the like. Nor again were the fierce Caribs, or the vindictive Iroquois the only tribes who practised this barbarity, but the milder Mexicans were equally addicted to it. So once more with those nations, which the enterprise of subsequent generations had made known to their fellows—the Feejees, the Manyemas, and the New Zealanders—these have been found to be fully as much addicted to this detestable habit, as any of the more ancient races of the world could have been. It is plain that this cannot be one of those customs, which some one nation first adopted, and so set an example, which others followed. There must be some deep-seated fancy or instinct in humanity, which has induced so many nations differing in character and habits widely from one another, to follow a practice so apparently strange and revolting. What is this motive?

It should be noted that human flesh does not seem to have

been eaten by any people, as what we call a *delicacy*, that is as being more palatable than other meats. Stories have been told, no doubt, representing this differently. The first discoverers of Peru and Mexico affirmed that the inhabitants were accustomed to breed infants like sucking pigs, for their tables, and when the mothers of these ceased to bear children, they were fattened and eaten like hogs. Stories of New Zealand chiefs offering "cold Bishop and clergy" as a *recherché* refreshment to their visitors, have been told by the Sydney Smiths of one age or another. But these were mere efforts of imagination. Cannibalism never prevailed in Peru at all, if the most trustworthy historians are to be credited; and though no doubt the victim, to be slain and eaten, among the Mexicans, was chosen with great care from among the young and the beautiful, this was not from any idea of his flesh furnishing a sweeter repast; but in order to show greater honour to the ceremony, in which he bore a conspicuous part.

Nor has human flesh ever been an *ordinary* article of food, with any community. It has been eaten, no doubt, even by a civilised people, under the stern pressure of extreme famine, as for example during several memorable sieges. It has even, in a season of unparalleled suffering from want of food, been exposed for sale in the shambles;[2] but it has only been under circumstances like these, that it has been so eaten. The thing is only done on certain special occasions—at the coronation of a sovereign, after a victory over emenies, at some solemn religious celebration, or at the funerals of friends and relatives. Prescott ("Conquest of Mexico," I. pp. 59 ff.) has drawn a graphic and terrible picture of these abominable rites among the Mexicans. Nor is the account given of cannibal feasts among other nations, by the travellers who have witnessed them, different from his, except only as regards the superior refinement of the Mexicans when contrasted with the savages of Fiji, or New Zealand.

One does not like to think it, but there can be little doubt

[2] At Tournus in France, in the year 1000 A.D. It should be added that the butcher who so offered it was burnt alive for the offence.

that a corrupt and debased religion is the root of these abominations. Human sacrifices originated in the perversion of a true principle—that of giving to God what is best; and this perversion finds its hideous consummation at the cannibal feast. Captives taken in war are offered as a thanksgiving sacrifice to the gods, who have granted the victory; and the feast which forms a main feature in every religious festivity —from which, indeed, the festivity takes its name—is regarded as incomplete without the dish containing the human victim, the most precious of all offerings, to the Deity in whose honour the feast is held. It is thought again that the dead cannot be disposed of in any manner so respectful to them, as by being eaten by their friends and relatives, and so, as it were, absorbed into them. "The Massagetæ," writes St. Jerome, "think those persons especially unfortunate who die of sickness, and they kill and devour their parent, relatives and kinsfolk, thinking it more proper for them to be eaten by them, than by worms." (Hieron. ad Jov. II.). Strabo says "that little was known (in his day) of Ireland, except that its inhabitants were cannibals, and regarded it as meritorious to eat their deceased parents." ("Geogr." IV.) Similar to this was the answer of the Indians to King Darius as related by Herodotus (Thalia, 38). He records how the Persian king asked some Greeks, "what sum of money would induce them to eat the bodies of their fathers after their deaths?" They replied that "no sum of money would tempt them to such an act." He then sent for some Calabar Indians, whose practice it was to eat the remains of their parents, and inquired "what sum of money would induce them to *burn* the bodies of their fathers?" They replied with equal horror, imploring him not to speak of such things. Seventeen centuries afterwards Friar Odoric says of the people of Dondin (probably Sumatra), "I rebuked them sharply for this (their custom of eating the bodies of their dead relatives) saying to them, 'Why do ye act thus against all reason? were a dog slain and put before another dog, he would by no means eat thereof, and why should ye do this, who seem to be men, en-

dowed with reason?" And their answer was, 'We do this lest the flesh of the dead should be eaten of worms; for if the worms should eat his flesh, his soul would suffer grievous pain.'" Further, it is not the relatives only but the victims themselves, in many instances, who share the same views. Dr. Leyden relates that "in the island of Sumatra when a man becomes infirm and weary of the world, he invites his own children to eat him. He ascends a lime tree round which his offspring and friends assemble, and shakes the tree. Then all join in a dirge to the effect that the season has come, the fruit is ripe, and it must fall. Thereupon he descends from the tree; his nearest relatives put him to death and devour his remains."

Corruptio optimi fit pessima. As a true religion is the greatest blessing mankind can possess, the spring of every earthly joy and comfort—so is a false religion the deadliest of all curses, the cause of crimes and miseries, which could arise from no other source than that polluted fountain.

Chapter XIII

Marriage—Funeral

BIRTHS, marriages, and deaths, are the sum of human life. Almost all nations have their special customs connected with all three: and seeing that—as regards two of them, at all events, men of every age and race differ in no way from one another; for that all bring nothing into this world and none can carry anything out—we might expect these customs to be everywhere very nearly the same. Such, however, is very far from being the case. In some countries for example, the birth of a child, especially of the eldest of the family, is an occasion of the greatest rejoicing. The relatives and friends repair to the house of the parents, to offer congratulations and gifts. A feast is held, which is repeated on the anniversary of the birth. Among the Jews, in particular, where barrenness is regarded as a great misfortune and reproach, a woman's safe delivery of her firstborn, called forth the deepest joy and thankfulness. In other lands, exactly the reverse is the case. Among the Thracians, we are told, the kinsfolk and acquaintance did indeed meet together in the chamber of the new-born infant, but under the influence of very different feelings. "When a child is born among the Thracians," says Herodotus (Terpsich. 4), "all its kindred sit round about it in a circle, and weep for the woes it will have to undergo, now that it has come into the world, making mention of every ill that falls to the lot of human kind." The same mournful view of man's birth into the world is echoed by more than one writer of renown.

Again, in some ancient communities, the birth of children was accounted as a mark of the special favour of Heaven. The father of a numerous progeny was held in general honour, and special privileges were accorded to him. The children were accounted the property of the state, and their lives were guarded with the most jealous care. In other lands they were viewed as a clog and a burden, of which their parents might rid themselves, if they chose it, by putting them to death, without incurring any punishment, indeed without inquiry. In some instances, where infants were born weakly or deformed, the law even required their destruction.

But it is chiefly in respect of their marriage and funeral rites, that the great differences are noticeable between different nations. And these may indeed move our wonder.

In the first place, while all civilised nations regard the marriage tie as strictly binding, and the greater part of them guard it with the most jealous severity, there have been and still are communities among whom it has no existence. Many nations of antiquity had no marriage rites whatsoever. Herodotus relates this of the Indians and Scythians, and later writers of the Tyrrhenians, Californians, and others. Odoric, Marco Polo and Maundeville affirm the same of the inhabitants of Lamori (by which some locality in Sumatra is probably denoted) and the same statements have been repeated by modern travellers, of tribes with which they have come into contact. This of course could not have been the normal condition of any people, and must be the result of many generations of progressive degradation.

There are, again, some countries in which a man may take as many wives as he pleases, and the women as many husbands, provided in both instances that these belong to the same nation as themselves. But to unite themselves with foreigners is regarded as a breach of their law of marriage.

Again, in some communities, a company consisting of a dozen men or so, take each a wife; but each man is viewed as the husband of all the twelve women, and each woman as the wife of all the twelve men. It is chiefly among certain Asiatic

nations, that this habit, and others like it prevail. Among the Arabs there is a still stranger custom. A man and woman, who have gone through the ceremony of marriage, are regarded as married during three days out of four, but as single during the fourth. This reminds us of the fairy tales, in which some one, who has incurred the wrath of some malevolent fairy, is obliged to assume the form of a beast or bird on certain days, while he returns to his own proper shape on the others. It would be incredible that a practice like this could really exist, if the evidence of it was not so indisputable.

The most lively imagination must fail in attempting to follow out the complications which would arise out of this extraordinary domestic ordinance. Imagine Mr. Caudle stopping his wife in some statement of her wrongs, by reminding her that on the particular day to which she was referring, he had not been her husband, but an independent bachelor, and was consequently free to flirt with Miss Prettyman, or have a noisy supper party, without blame! Imagine the perplexity of the tradesmen as to the liability of the husband, for any goods that Mrs. Caudle might order; for which he would be answerable, if ordered on the Wednesday, Thursday, or Friday, but not on the Tuesday or Saturday. Imagine the

subtle pleadings of the lawyers, if a man were charged with a breach of promise of marriage, which he made to some lady on his bachelor day! How singular must have been the relations of the husband and wife when they met, as mere acquaintances at the house of a mutual friend! The pen of a Rabelais could not do justice to such a situation.

Polygamy proper—the possession, that is, of many wives by the same man—is a custom very common, as every one knows, in oriental countries. It is also one of high antiquity, and must have sprung up soon after the flood, as we find the patriarch Abraham practising it without hesitation. It appears to have been permitted, though hardly sanctioned, by the Mosaic law. David and Solomon do not seem to have been conscious of committing any offence, when they multiplied their wives by the score and by the hundred. Even when the subject is directly spoken of in communications from on high, it is not treated as a sin. "I gave thee thy master's house, and thy master's *wives* into thy bosom," were the words of Almighty God delivered by Nathan. And though, throughout Jewish history, the evils arising from polygamy are evident enough, it was not until the appearance of our Lord Himself on earth, that the original ordinance of Divine Wisdom was reasserted, and the union of one man and one woman declared to be the only true marriage.

Indeed, though polygamy may prevail throughout Eastern countries, and though attempts may be made to introduce it into certain communities of the Anglo-Saxon race, it can only take effect among the upper classes anywhere. Kings and great nobles may have their seraglios, where due provision is made for the separate maintenance of the women, and the regulation of the household. But a poor man, whose wives had to live together, and share the domestic drudgery between them, would find himself breathing such an atmosphere of petty jealousies and dissensions, that he would speedily exercise the privilege given him by the law, of divorcing all but one. Practically, in all civilised lands, the original institution of marriage reasserts itself among the lower orders. Hence

though the marriages of the wealthy are generally a mere money transaction, the bride being bought of her parents,—often with less care and ceremony than would be bestowed on the purchase of a horse,—the wife of a poor man, as a general rule, is wooed and won.

And nothing is more curious than the different mode of wooing pursued in different countries. Among the Koreki Tartars, for instance, when a man has agreed with the parents of any girl, that she shall become his wife, he straightway repairs to her tent, to commence paying his addresses. She is aware, of course, of his intentions, and makes her preparations accordingly, which are of a singular character. She sends to invite two or three of her companions, and as soon as the suitor enters, they seize upon him, tear his hair, slap and scratch his face; until, discomfited by this unsentimental reception, he shews signs of beating a retreat, when the lady relents, and calls him back.

Among the Moors, as soon as the contract has been concluded with the parents, the future husband begins his courtship, but he pursues the very opposite course to that of the Tartar suitor. He goes stealthily and in disguise to the house of the bride, and only meets her clandestinely and under cover of night. Notwithstanding that every one knows of the betrothal, and that no one raises any objection to it, the engaged pair avoid observation with the affectation of the utmost alarm of discovery. This farce is often carried on for weeks after the actual marriage has taken place. When the day appointed for the marriage arrives, the bridegroom, accompanied by a number of his best men, sets out by night, and surrounds the house of the bride. She, and her female attendants, make all possible resistance, and alarm the whole village with their cries. But no real opposition is offered.

In Egypt also, it is *de rigueur* that the bride should be carried by main force to the bridegroom's house, all her friends interposing to prevent the removal. The mother and daughter, in particular, cling to one another so determinedly, that it requires the exercise of a good deal of force to tear them

asunder. It is the same in Greenland. When the preliminaries for the marriage have all been arranged, two women are sent by the bridegroom to fetch the bride. Decorum requires that she should offer a strenuous resistance. When she is introduced to her husband's chamber, she sits in a corner with her face averted, and her hair dishevelled. He is obliged to implore and entreat her forgiveness, until at last she relents.

The very opposite to this is the custom prevailing in Bambouk of Ethiopia. When everything relating to the marriage has been agreed on, the bride proceeds to the house of her future husband, and receiving from the attendants a calabash of water, enters the room where he is sitting, prostrates herself before him, and having washed his feet in the calabash, dries them with her garments.

In Brittany it is usual to act a sort of play on the wedding morning. The bridegroom, attired in his best, goes to the house of the bride's parents and demands her of them. They affect not to understand whom he means, and bring out perhaps the grandmother of the girl instead. On his replying that this is not the person he wants, some other female is exhibited. The farce is carried on until all have had enough, and then the bride is fetched out in full bridal costume, and the parties proceed to church.

Much the same custom is followed in Wales. On the evening before the wedding, some of the bridegroom's friends repair to the residence of the bride, in order to make sure that she has not run away. Her friends conceal her from discovery, hiding her in some obscure corner, or perhaps dressing her in man's clothes. After a while she is found, and a general merry-making follows. Next morning the best men return and demand the bride. She is withheld from them for a long time, and when at last she is found, one of them places her on horseback behind him, and gallops with her to church.

Among the Calmuck Tartars the bride is also mounted on horseback, but not to go to church. This is, in fact, their mode of wooing. When any man wants to marry a girl, she gets on horseback and gallops off, he pursuing her after the same

fashion. If he succeed in catching her, she must take him as as her husband. But the Calmuck girls know how to ride, and it is said that no one of them was ever overtaken by a man, unless she had a fancy for him.

Among the Spartans bridals were conducted with a secrecy which formed a strange contrast to the noisy rites of some other nations. On the nuptial night the bride was disguised in man's clothes, and the interview between her and her husband took place in some obscure and carefully concealed apartment. The bridegroom slipped away from the society of his companions, and it was the etiquette not to notice his departure or his return, which commonly took place after a short interval. Husband and wife continued to see each other only after this stealthy fashion for years after their marriage—perhaps until several children had been born to them.

In China it is not usual for the young couple to see one another previously to the wedding. The bridegroom agrees to pay a certain price for the lady, who is then sent to him in a closely locked sedan, attended by a splendid cavalcade with music and banners. The key of the sedan is delivered to the husband, who opens the door, and takes his first look at his bargain. If he is satisfied, he hands her out and introduces her to her new relatives, and the day concludes with feasting and merry-making. But if he does not like the looks of the damsel, he locks the door again, and incontinently sends her back to her parents.

This may appear but a rough reception, but, at any rate, it is not so unpleasant as that which, according to Burton, the Somali accord their wives. "On first entering the nuptial hut," he tells us, "the bridegroom draws forth his horsewhip, and inflicts memorable chastisement upon the fair person of his bride, with the view of taming any lurking propensity to shrewishness she may possess" (Burton, p. 121). The old Muscovites followed the same practice. They thought it best to begin married life by administering a sound flogging to the wife.

But the men do not always have it their own way, not even

in savage life. In the Ladrones the women (we are told) exercise absolute authority over their husbands, as in other countries husbands exercise it over their wives. We are informed by Gobien that "the wife is absolute mistress of the house, the husband not daring to dispose of anything without her consent. If she disapprove of his conduct in general, or of his treatment of her in particular, she wreaks her vengeance on him, or abandons him entirely. On a separation of this kind, the wife takes all the property and the children."

Among some tribes of the Mongols it is customary to smear the bride's head with oil and red lead, and at the bridal feast the bridegroom is required to feed her—probably because, under the circumstances, no one else could be found who would be devoted enough to do it. In Congo the lady adorns herself in this way, in order to attract suitors!

In Ceylon it is said that the betrothed couple are allowed to live together for a fortnight before marriage, to see how they liked one another—a dangerous experiment one would think. In Congo this is sometimes extended to two or three years. Among the Turcomans precisely the opposite course is followed, and the newly married pair are not permitted to live together for a year after marriage; during all which time the bride is employed in preparing carpets and clothes for the future home.

The relations between the husband and wife and the new connections acquired by the marriage, are sometimes very curious. In China they seem to consider the connection thus formed to be almost as close as blood relationship. The American Indians, on the contrary, regard the marriage as necessarily causing alienation, even where the families have been intimate before. It is thought most improper for the man to speak to his mother-in-law, or the woman to her father-in-law. If they chance to meet one another, when out walking, they cover their faces and look away. The same is said to be the case with some tribes of the Mongols and Africans.

One more matrimonial custom—the most extraordinary, it

may safely be said, of all—is the Chinese practice of marrying the dead. For a record of this we are indebted to Marco Polo. He tells us that, among the Chinese, "if any man has a daughter who dies before marriage, and another man has a son who dies before marriage, the parents of the two arrange a grand wedding between the dead couple. They draw up a regular contract, and when the contract papers are made out, they put them into the fire, in order that the principals in the other world may know the fact, and look upon each other as man and wife. The parents also thenceforth regard themselves as related to each other, just as if the children had lived and married."

Strange as this sounds to us, Polo's narrative is fully confirmed by other writers. "In the province of Shan-si," writes Navarrette, quoted by Marsden, "they have a ridiculous custom of marrying dead folks to one another. It falls out that one man's son, and another man's daughter die. While the coffins are in the house (and they sometimes keep them two or three years) the parents agree to marry them. They send the usual presents, as if the pair were alive, with much ceremony and music. After this they put the two coffins together, hold the wedding dinner in their presence, and lastly, lay them together in one tomb. The parents from this time forth are looked upon—not merely as friends, but as relatives—just as they would have been had their children been married when in life."

When an engagement has been made between a youth and maiden, and the latter dies before the marriage, an effigy of her is sometimes brought to the intended bridegroom's house, who receives it with all the formalities customary in the instance of a living bride. He then burns the figure, and erects a tablet to it. (Kidd's "China," p. 179.)

The disposal of the dead, and the mournful ceremonies which accompany it, among different nations vary almost as widely as the marriage rites. The process of embalming the body is one of very high, indeed of undiscoverable, antiquity. A description is given by Herodotus (Euterpe, 85) of this

process, by which the body was so skilfully preserved that it has resisted decay for three thousand years. He has given an elaborate account of the process. The brain and intestines are extracted and enclosed in mortuary vessels and their place supplied by myrrh, cassia and other spices. The body is then placed in natrum or subcarbonate of soda, for the space of seventy days. After this it is wrapped in bandages of fine linen and enclosed in wooden cases, fashioned (we are told) after the supposed likeness of Osiris.

This seems to have been the general practice of the Egyptians, the most ancient nation of which we have any record. Yet probably it was not the primitive custom. We find Abraham, the direct lineal descendant of Shem, during the lifetime of that patriarch, committing his dead to the earth. It would be very difficult to suppose either that Shem, the son who inherited the Divine blessing (Gen. ix. 26), had not preserved the original tradition, or that the pious Abraham should have departed from it. The Jews continued ever afterwards, except perhaps during the time of their sojourn in Egypt, the same mode of sepulture: and the embalmment of Jacob and Joseph can hardly be cited as a departure from their rule, because as the bodies of these patriarchs were to be removed into the land of Canaan, their preservation by artificial process was indispensable. They did subsequently in some sort embalm the dead though only in the instance of the wealthy; but having done so, they committed them to the grave.

Cremation, or the destruction of the remains by fire, is also a very ancient institution. It is as old, at all events, as the time of Homer; but was not by any means in universal, or even in general use. Cicero says that the dead at Athens, in the time of its founder Cecrops, were buried; and that seems to have been the practice with the Dorian races also, in the earlier times. In later days either mode of disposing of the corpse was adopted according to the fancy of the relatives, until the spread of Christianity put a period to cremation.

Among the Magi, or Fire-worshippers, the predecessors

of the modern Parsees, the bodies were never burnt, nor buried until they had been exposed to be mangled by birds or beasts of prey. Herodotus tells us (Clio. 140) that "they have this custom, and practise it without any concealment." The modern Parsees do not appear ever to inter their dead. Niebuhr and Chardin assure us that they expose the corpses to be devoured by wild animals. Chardin relates that there was in his time, near Ispahan, a round tower 35 feet high; without any doorway or other entrance. On the top there was a grating of iron on which the bodies of the dead were laid. The flesh was soon eaten by birds of prey, and then the bones fell through the bars into the hollow of the tower. There are many of these towers, some used as public and some as private cemeteries, in the neighbourhood of Bombay. The idea connected with them seems to be that the disposal of man after his death being a matter between him and his Creator, other men ought not in any way to interfere with his remains.

The ceremonies accompanying funerals also differ very greatly, in accordance with the character of the various nations, which practise them. The Greeks dressed the body of the deceased in his best robe and crowned his head with flowers. It was then laid on a bed, where it remained for two days: and during this interval it was frequently visited by the relatives, who stood round uttering loud lamentations, and tearing their hair for sorrow. Among the Romans the nearest relative endeavoured to catch in his mouth the last sigh of the expiring man. The same person also closed his eyes when the breath had departed, and thrice called him by name bidding him farewell. Among both Greeks and Romans it was customary to place in the mouth of the dead man, an obolus which would pay the ferryman for transporting him over the river Styx. A honeycake was also laid by the side of the corpse wherewith to pacify Cerberus, the grim porter of the Infernal World.

On the third day the body was carried out on an open bier, and was committed to the ground or to the funeral pyre, as the case might be. With the wealthier Romans the interment

was sometimes delayed till the eighth day. A long funeral procession accompanied the remains of the wealthy, headed usually by hired musicians, and attended by professional mourners, who filled the air with lamentations. Jesters and buffoons simulating the appearance and manners of the deceased followed; and where the dead man had manumitted his slaves, these also accompanied the funeral. At the obsequies of the great, victims were sacrificed, and sometimes gladiatorial games exhibited.

Among the Jews the employment of hired musicians and mourners was as common as with the classical nations; and they carried forth the dead after much the same fashion. But their graves were differently constructed, being cavities made in the rock, or lined with masonry, with a large stone to block the entrance. The Jewish mourners also rent their clothes, and heaped ashes on their heads; they put on sackcloth, and covered their faces and heads. Certain days were set apart, called the "days of mourning," during which continual lamentation was made, sometimes at the grave of the deceased, sometimes in the house where all the relatives were assembled, sometimes on the flat roof of the house, in the East a common place of resort.

The days of mourning were an institution observed by the Egyptians also, and with great solemnity and reverence. They also abstained from baths, wine, and all delicacies while they lasted, suffering their hair and beards to grow long, which at other times they shaved closely. They had likewise one very singular institution peculiar to themselves, which consisted in judging the dead. When a man was carried out for interment, which among them consisted in depositing the embalmed body in a chamber prepared for its reception—before this could be done, he was required to undergo a trial and receive a sentence. The judges appointed to try him met on the shore of a lake across which the body was conveyed in a barge. Then the public accuser was heard stating such offences as he charged against the deceased, and the advocate of the latter was allowed to reply. Even the Kings of Egypt had to

undergo this ordeal, and if the verdict went against them, the burial of their remains was forbidden.

In many countries, especially eastern countries, it is the habit to provide the dead with all manner of articles which, it is thought, will be useful to him in another state of being. Mention has already been made of the piece of money to pay the ferryman of the invisible world. Among the Mongols, every day until the funeral takes place, they set a table covered with food, before the dead. If he is a wealthy man, they further provide him with arms, clothing, horses, and wives, which last are slain, in order that they may accompany him into the spirit-land. Herodotus relates this of the Scythian kings (Melpom. 71); Marco Polo repeats it of the Chinese (II. 171). The same notion prevailed among the Peruvians. In 1790 a Spanish captain, named Bauza, opened some sepulchres near Chacota Bay, and found some bodies sitting cross-legged and wrapped in coarse woollen cloth. Each of them had a bag slung round his neck in which various gifts had been placed. Some ears of corn, fragments of plates and coins, were also found placed in jars by the side of the corpses.

STRANGE MEN–MONSTERS

Chapter XIV

Giants—Giant Races—Individual Giants

No belief entertained by mankind is more widely spread, or more deeply seated than that our remote ancestors were more long-lived, more beautiful, and of greater strength and stature than ourselves. The earliest writers, whose works have descended to us, affirm, or appear to affirm, as much; and even in our own day the opinion is not extinct. So far as the duration of life is concerned, that, no doubt, has the express sanction of Holy Scripture, and will be accepted without question, by all believers. With regard to the second notion—that our ancestors exceeded us in symmetry and beauty—that may be said to be a matter of taste and fancy, very difficult to determine, because the ideas of mankind (which is made up of a variety of races, and has existed through many centuries) differ widely as to what constitutes grace and beauty. But the third point is one open to free discussions, and there are—one would think—sufficient data in existence, by which it might be decided. Meanwhile, it may be interesting to collect the evidence which exists as to the general prevalence of the opinion.

The passage which is generally supposed to have given rise to the idea, so far as Jewish and Christian writers are concerned, is that which occurs in Genesis vi. 4, "There were giants in the earth in those days." It is no wonder that in times when the Hebrew language was almost unknown, and the Greek known very imperfectly to the best scholars, these words should have given rise to the belief in question. Closely and critically examined they do not bear it out at all; but that fact, it was reserved for a later age to point out. Meanwhile

it will be well, before proceeding to consider the text in question, to remark that though it will explain the widespread existence of the idea, in the instance of the Jews and all Christian nations, it in no way accounts for the prevalence of the same notion among those who had no acquaintance with, and would have acknowledged no authority in, the Mosaic writings.

And there is ample evidence that they entertained the notion in all its fulness. Homer speaks of a race of giants, over whom Eurymedon reigned ("Odyssey," vii. 59), and described the gigantic race of the Cyclopes, in the tenth book of the same poem. He regarded them as one of the primitive races of the world, whom the gods ultimately destroyed for their insolent rebellion against them. Hesiod reports of them that they sprang from the union of Uranus and Gé (Heaven and Earth). Later chroniclers represent them as not only rebelling against the gods, but as attempting to storm Heaven itself, and being cast down to suffer torment in the lowest Tartarus, for the impious offence. Writers subsequent to these clothe the idea in different language, but it remains in the main the same. Berosus tells us that the ten antediluvian kings of Chaldea were all giants. Lucretius speaks of the vast proportions of the earliest created beings. Virgil, following Homer ("Iliad," v. 305), describes Turnus as raising a huge stone to cast at his antagonist, which six men of his own age could not carry on their shoulders ("Æneid," xii. 900). Juvenal declares that the gradual diminution of the human race in respect of size and strength had begun even in the days of Homer (Juvenal's "Satires," xv. 69). The Jews, it may be added, concurred in this continuous deterioration of mankind, as may be gathered from 2 Esdras, v. 54: "Consider thou how ye are less of stature than those that were before you. And so are they that come after you less than ye."

To return to the passage in Genesis, which (it has been said above) is presumed to have originated the notion, we may in the first place observe that the Hebrew word rendered

"giants" in our English Version does not denote persons of enormous stature; and in the second, that the word "giant" itself, in its original language (the Greek), has no such meaning either.

The literal meaning of the word in the Hebrew original is either "the fallen" or "the violent;" Hebraists are not agreed which. If the latter interpretation be adopted, it accords well enough with what is said subsequently in the chapter, as to the earth being filled with *violence;* which, together with its moral corruption, caused its Maker to destroy it. But violence, it needs not to say, has no necessary connection with gigantic stature.

If the other, and the more generally adopted, interpretation be followed, some explanation must be given of the word "fallen." The notion that they *fell upon* the rest of mankind, i.e., oppressed and slew them, is quite untenable, as is that also which represents their fellow-men as *falling* in terror before them. A more plausible explanation at all events, affirms that they were a "fallen" race, being the offspring of the "sons of God" (or angels), who were allured by the beauty of women to take human shape, and intermarry with them. This is the view supported by the Jewish Rabbis, the Apocryphal book of Enoch, and the great majority of the early Fathers. Dr. Pusey says that the idea "gained for a time extensive, yet not complete, reception in the Church, viz., that the sons of God who were the parents of the giants before the Flood, were not the sons of Seth, but Angels." (Pusey on Daniel, p. 387.) Others would explain the persons in question to be "fallen" in the sense of having departed from the righteousness of their ancestors, Seth and Enoch. The present book is not suitable for a discussion of this question. It is enough for our purpose to show that neither according to this explanation either, is there any hint of extraordinary stature in these presumed giants.

But again the word "giant" (γίγας), which was first introduced into the text of Scripture by the Septuagint translators (B.C. 277) does not in itself contain any reference to

great height or strength. The literal English of the word is "earth-born"—born, that is to say, of the intermixture of the earthly with the unearthly or preternatural, which we call a "monster." The idea of the beings thus engendered being of immense power and stature, is one which has grown up out of men's superstitions and fancies, but has no etymological connection with the word. There is absolutely nothing in the Mosaic account of the world before the Flood to support the belief that the race of men who then occupied the earth were different from ourselves in respect of stature.

Nor is there any other evidence of it. On the contrary, whatever evidence *does* exist on the subject tends directly to an opposite conclusion. We have the remains of ancient palaces, dating in some instances from the very birth of history. The doorways in these are of only just sufficient height to allow men of the present age to pass beneath them. The earliest measurements of distance computed by the length of the human stride, accord accurately with the capabilities of men now living in this respect. The helmets and cuirasses dug up in battle-fields of untold antiquity are not found to be too large for the skulls and shoulders of the soldiers of existing armies. What is a still surer test—the rude stone coffins made for our ancestors in times too remote for contemporary history, are no larger, as a rule, than those which convey the dead to their graves in the present age. Nay, we have the actual bodies of men who were embalmed before the Exodus of the Israelites, and these are found to be no whit larger than those of their descendants, more than 3000 years afterwards.

There can be no doubt that the belief is wholly without foundation; yet we may be well tempted to inquire what can have originated it. For there is no question that, whether delusive or not, it is one almost universally entertained. We have already quoted ancient authors in proof of this—it may be added that writers subsequent to the Christian era express exactly the same opinion. The learned and intelligent Augustine does not hesitate to express it ("De civit. Dei," xv. 9). The monks who composed the chronicles of England, in gen-

eral commence with the assertion that the land was originally inhabited by a race of giants, and the statement does not seem to have been seriously questioned for many succeeding generations. Only two centuries ago so judicious a writer as Calmet has the following passage: "It is probable that the first men were of a strength and stature superior to those of mankind at present, since they lived a much longer time; long life being commonly the effect of a strong constitution." ("Dict. Bible," i. 572). Calmet might surely have remembered that as a matter of fact great stature and length of days rarely go together. Nevertheless Cruden, a century afterwards, repeated the same assertion, and Lord Byron, in his poem of the "Deformed Transformed," when he calls up the phantom of Achilles, represents the latter as having been "twelve cubits" in height.

There is no doubt of the universality of the belief, but how is it to be accounted for? Doubtless by the self-dissatisfaction which is the natural fruit of the Fall. Man feels in himself at once the capacity and the duty of being infinitely wiser and better than he is. When he compares himself as he is, with what he ought to be, he seems ever to be sinking lower and lower in the scale of being, and fancies that his fathers before him must of necessity have been wiser, stronger, and happier than himself. The good old times when men were brave and honest and true, haunt the imagination of every age, and as it is with his moral qualities, so it is also with his bodily power. The very schoolboy, if you talk to him of his school, is sure to tell you that the boys are nothing like as tall and as strong as they used to be years ago, and will regale you, if you care to listen, with stories of the feats performed by his schoolfellows some generations back, which no one of the present day would venture to attempt.

We may discard then altogether the fancy that the whole of the human race were once of gigantic size; and proceed to inquire, first into the existence of races of giants at various periods and localities; and, secondly, of individual instances of men of enormous stature.

The first alleged instance of a gigantic people are the Rephaim, Emim, Zuzim and Anakim. These seem all to have been tribes belonging to the same nation, rather than separate nations: or possibly only families, in which the men were, as a rule, all of great height, and some among them gigantic. The Rephaim were defeated and dispersed by Chedorlaomer and his allies; and Og the king of Basan, who is said to have been the remnant, *i.e.*, the last surviving member, of the colossal race, was similarly overcome by the Israelites. The other gigantic families were subsequently conquered, and either extirpated or driven away. There is nothing here to show anything like the existence of a nation, in which the stature of the people generally was what we call gigantic.

It is true that when the spies were sent out by Joshua to give their report of the land of Canaan, they returned with the information that they "had seen the giants, the sons of the Anakim, and they seemed to themselves to be but as grasshoppers in their sight." But this was a mere figure of speech to express their terror. Doubtless they had really fallen in with this family, the males of which were of exceptional stature and strength. But we know that the whole nation could not have been of the like proportions, first, because in that case the spies would not have been punished for their unfaithful report, and, secondly, because the Israelites would hardly have succeeded with such ease in overpowering them, if they had been so.

Ten or twelve centuries later we have the case of the Germans, whose towering stature and massive frames are mentioned by those trustworthy historians, Cæsar and Tacitus. Cæsar ("Bell. Gall., IV. 1) speaks of the "huge bulk of their bodies," which he describes as the consequence of the free and hardy life which their youths were wont to lead. Tacitus, in more than one passage, records the "tall limbs," the "enormous frames," and "vast bodies" of the Germans. Sidonius, four centuries afterwards, describes the same people, among whom he was then living, as "septipedes homines," men 7 feet high, or to speak more accurately, 6 feet 5 inches, according

to our present rate of reckoning, the Roman foot not exceeding eleven of our inches. But even making this deduction, this would be an extraordinary stature to be the average one of any nation, and a better case may be made out for the ancient Germans, as "a gigantic race," than for any other on record. But after all, it is plain that they were simply tall men, not what is generally understood by the word giants.

Passing on to mediæval times, the reader will hardly require to be told that Sir John Maundeville has something

to say on this subject. He tells us that after he had passed the Perilous Valley, near unto the Isle of Mistorak—wherever that valley or that island may be situated—he either heard of, or saw (he does not clearly explain which, but one would rather infer the former) "a great isle the inhabitants of which are great giants 28 or 30 feet long, with no clothing but skins of beasts, that they hang upon them, and they eat nothing but raw flesh, and drink milk of beasts." "And men told us," he goes on, warming to his subject as he proceeds, "that in an isle beyond there were giants of greater stature; some of them 45 or 50 feet long, and even (as some men say) of 50 cubits long. But," he adds cautiously, "I saw none of *those,* for I had no lust to go to those parts, because that no man comes

either into that isle or into the other, but he will be devoured anon. And men have said many times those giants take men, in the sea, out of their ships, and bring them to land, two in one hand and two in the other, eating them going, all raw and alive." Notwithstanding the lively picture here suggested, few of my readers will attach enough weight to Sir John's assertions, to require any refutation of them.

With the discovery of America, a century and a half afterwards, there came statements of gigantic races occupying portions of the new world which had been laid open. The North American Indians assured their European visitors that their land was once peopled by Brobdignags who could with ease stride over the widest rivers or the tallest pine-trees. Bernal Diaz reports that the Mexicans told him their land was formerly inhabited by a race of wicked giants. In proof of this they brought him a bone which he measured. Though he was, as he tells us, a man of ordinary stature, this single bone was as long as his whole body. He and his companions were fully persuaded of the story told them, and held it for certain that there were once giants in that land.

In the south the first voyagers brought back to Europe the intelligence of a people of prodigious stature in the country, to which the name of Patagonia had been given. Magellan was the first to visit these regions, and he declared that the height of its inhabitants exceeded eight feet, adding that they were strong in proportion to their height. "He was so tall," says Pigafetta of one of them, "that our heads scarcely came up to his waist, and his voice was like that of a bull." One or two of these children of Anak were enticed on board, and secured (as the Portuguese supposed) by stout lashings. But they no sooner understood why they had been tied, than they snapped the cords us though they had been packthread.

Oliver Noort and Sebastian de Weert report giants in the Straits of Magellan, who were ten feet high; and Thomas Turner, not to be outdone by a Dutchman in the catalogue of wonders, affirms that *he* saw them *twelve* feet in height. Drake and Cavendish make nearly the same statements, the latter

asserting that he found a human footprint in those parts, which was eighteen inches long. Le Maire and Schouten, two Dutch captains, opened some graves which they found on that coast, and exhumed (as they allege) skeletons, ten and eleven feet in length. The skulls completely covered the Dutchmen's heads like helmets, so much larger were they than the skulls of Europeans.

The controversy respecting the real stature of the Patagonians was carried on for more than two centuries. When Robertson, in 1777, wrote his history of America, he considered it to be one of the points which still remained unsettled. Commodore Byron, who visited this coast in 1764, repeated the old assertions respecting the natives, whose height he estimated as averaging eight feet, though some individuals might be found who were more than a foot taller. He was contradicted, however, by Wallis and Carteret, who visited the same country two years afterwards, and took the measure of a considerable number of the inhabitants. He found them to be from six feet to six feet five or seven inches; and so far as he could discover, the persons he measured, were the same, whom Byron has seen only two years before, and had reported as being fully a foot-and-a-half taller. Mr. Falkner, who resided as a missionary for forty years in the southern parts of America, says that "the Patagonians are a large-bodied people; but he never heard of the gigantic race which others have mentioned." Captain Fitzroy also says that "among two or three hundred of these people, scarcely half-a-dozen are to be seen, whose height is under five feet nine or ten inches, though none have been recently measured, who exceeded six feet and some inches." In brief, the Patagonians, like the ancient Germans, are tall men, but nothing more.

But though the stories respecting a nation of giants, in comparison with whom the ordinary races of men would appear as pigmies, must be pronounced as fabulous—instances of individuals, who may fairly claim the name of giant, may here and there be found. A great number of such cases have been recorded, both in ancient and modern times. Setting aside

the creations of myth and legend, the earliest instances appear to be those mentioned in the books of Deuteronomy and Samuel—Og and Goliath. Og's stature is not specified, but is inferred from the length of the bedstead on which he slept, which is reported in the Book of Deuteronomy to have been nine cubits, or thirteen feet six inches long. It being assumed that a man would probably be a foot, or a foot and a half, shorter than his bedstead, Og is set down as twelve feet high. But this of course is mere guess-work. We cannot tell how much longer than himself his bedstead may have been. Some scholars also are of opinion that the words ought not to be translated "a bedstead of iron," but "a sarcophagus of black basalt;" and Chardin and other travellers have noticed the fact, that in ancient times, there was a tendency to make the coffins and tombs of royal personages a good deal larger than was necessary, in order to impress men with a sense of their greatness. It is not unlikely that, whether a bed or a coffin may have been intended, it was one third longer than the actual stature of its occupant: in which case, Og's height would have been about nine feet, and that is not beyond the bounds of reasonable possibility. The most extravagant traditions (it may here be remarked) about this gigantic King of Basan are current in the East. One of his bones is said to have served for a bridge across a river. He is reported to have lived for three thousand years, and to have escaped the Flood by wading along by the side of the Ark. Also to have roasted a fish, by holding it near the sun, with many other extravagancies of the same kind.

The stature of Goliath, with whom we have next to deal, *is* specified. It is declared in the Book of Samuel to have been six cubits and a span. This would make his height nine feet nine inches. But two things should here be noted: first, that there is some dispute as to the dimensions of the Hebrew cubit, which, according to some, was eighteen inches long, and according to others, twenty-one; and secondly, although in the Hebrew version of the Book of Samuel, Goliath's stature is stated at six cubits and a span, the Septuagint renders the passage "*four* cubits and a span," and Josephus ("Ant." vi. 9,

§1) has the same estimate. In this case, Goliath would be six feet nine inches high, or, if the larger reckoning of the cubit be taken, nearly eight feet. The impression conveyed by the narrative is that Goliath was a man, not only of large, but of prodigious stature, and that he probably reached the larger of these two estimates.

Herodotus (B. I. 68) tells us that the skeleton of Orestes was discovered, in consequence of the declaration of an oracle, and the coffin containing it was found to be seven cubits (ten feet and a half) long. The historian adds that the skeleton was equal (ἴσος) in length to the coffin. This could not, of course, be literally true, and we must understand ἴσος here to mean "corresponding," "similar;" the skeleton, like the coffin, was huge. But this gives no definite measurement. Passing on some centuries, we are told of a man named Eleazar, who was "seven cubits" in height. He was a Jew by birth, and was sent to the Emperor Tiberius, by Artabanus King of Persia (Joseph. "Antiq." XVIII. 4, § 1). The lowest estimate of the Hebrew cubit is eighteen inches. If Josephus, therefore, is to be trusted, this man was ten feet six inches high. Pliny quotes the case of Gabbaras the Arabian, who, he says, was nine feet nine inches, and who lived in the reign of the Emperor Claudius, and adds that, during that of Augustus, there were two others, Posio and Secundilla by name, who were six inches taller than even this, and whose bodies were preserved as curiosities in a repository belonging to the Gardens of Sallust. (Pliny, N. H. VII. 16.)

The Emperor Maximin is the next instance of a man of extraordinary height. He was a Thracian, born early in the third century of Christianity. He was brought up as a shepherd, but enlisted in the Roman army, where he attracted the attention of the Emperor Severus, and gradually rose, mainly by unscrupulous ferocity, until he attained the purple. His height is said to have been eight feet six, and his muscular development to have been one of perfect symmetry, which is rare in the instances of such inordinate height. The circumference of his thumb, was equal to that of an ordinary-sized

woman's wrist, so that he wore his wife's bracelet as a ring. He could, single-handed, drag a loaded waggon, and with a blow of his fist shatter a horse's jaw. He is said also to have eaten forty pounds of meat at a sitting, and to have drunk between seven and eight gallons of wine. (Cuvier, VIII. p. 37.)

Harold Hardrada in the eleventh century, is said by Bishop Pontoppidan to have been ten feet high. A man born at Turgau, who bore arms in the service of Charlemagne, is described by the writers of those times, as being of such enormous stature, as to fell whole ranks of the enemy as a man mows hay; and that he could run three or four adversaries through with his sword, and carry them, like spitted larks, over his shoulder!

Becanus, the Flemish antiquary of the last century, relates that he saw three persons of enormous size: a youth nearly nine feet high, a man nearly ten, and a woman quite ten. Delriot reports having met at Rohra, a Piedmontese, who was over nine feet; Vanderbrook, a negro at Congo of the same height; Diemerbrock at Utrecht, in 1665, a man eight feet six inches high, and of strength proportionate to his height. He was born in Holland, and his parents were persons of ordinary stature. In our own country, John Middleton is said to have been nine feet three inches; and William Evans, from Monmouthshire, porter to King Charles I., was so tall that he danced at a Court Masque, with the dwarf Jeffery Hudson in his pocket. An advertisement is preserved in the British Museum, of which this is a copy:—"The Giant, or Miracle of Nature. This so much admired young man, aged 19 last June, 1664, was born in Ireland. He now reaches ten feet and a half. He is to be seen at the Catherine Wheel, Southwark Fair." Ireland seems to be the land of giants. John Malone, who was born at Port Lester, in 1682, was examined by Dr. Musgrave, who gives his measure as seven feet six inches. Patrick Cotter from the same island, was eight feet seven inches and a half. Murphy, who was born at Killowen, in County Down, and for many years exhibited himself as a show, was eight feet nine or ten; he died of smallpox

at twenty-six. O'Brien, who commonly goes by the name of the Irish Giant, and who died in June 1783, was eight foot four inches. His skeleton is in the Museum of the Royal College of Surgeons. He is said to have been haunted by the idea that his bones would not be allowed to rest peaceably in his grave, and to have taken all possible precautions to prevent its violation, but as the reader has heard wholly in vain.

We must not omit here to mention Frederick of Prussia's fancy for gigantic guardsmen, and the unscrupulous means he employed to accomplish his ends. Any unusually tall woman of whom he might chance to catch sight was forcibly carried off from her home, and married to a colossus of her own proportions. It is said that his proceedings, persistently pursued for many years, have produced a sensible difference in the height of the inhabitants of Potsdam. One of Frederick's grenadiers was eight feet six high, and another in the service of the Duke of Brunswick was of the same stature.

A great deal of the evidence respecting giants is derived from human bones and skeletons, which have been discovered in various places; and most of the utterly extravagant tales of men twenty, thirty, and forty feet high, have been derived from this source. We must not set these down as mere inventions. From the imperfect knowledge of anatomy in early times, the bones of enormous extinct animals have been mistaken for those of man. But there are some cases to which this does not apply. M. Andreas Thevet ("Descript. of America," publ. 1575), tells us that he was shown by a Spanish merchant the skull and bones of a giant who had been eleven feet five inches in height. M. Thevet took the measure of the remains. The skull was three feet one inch in circumference, and the leg bones three feet four inches long. A skeleton nine feet long, enclosed in a stone coffin, is said to have been dug up in 1685 at Repton in Derbyshire ("Philosoph. Transact." XXIV.); and another on Salisbury Plain in 1714, nine feet four inches in length. A report of this is given in the "Gazette" of October, 1719. Dr. Molyneux ("Philos. Trans." XXII., p. 471), affirms that there is an *os frontis* in

the Anatomical School at Leyden, twice the ordinary size of that belonging to a well-proportioned man six feet high. The doctor argues, therefore, that the owner of this *os frontis* must have been twelve feet in stature. "But," remarks Mr. Luther Holden, the distinguished writer on Osteology, "though this *os frontis* does measure 7 5/16 inches vertically, and 8 3/4 inches transversely, it is a pathological enlargement of the skull *cap*. The base of the same skull is of the ordinary size. The suggestion, therefore, that this *os frontis* belonged to a man twelve feet high, is quite untenable."

Quite in our own times, there have been Loushkin, the Russian giant, eight feet five (whose fac-simile is to be seen at Madame Tussaud's); Chang, the Chinese, said to have been nearly eight feet, though this has been disputed; Brice, the Frenchman, seven feet eight inches; and the two Americans, eight feet six, and eight feet respectively, whose Brobdignag wedding was celebrated in London a few years ago.

Chapter XV

Dwarfs—Dwarf Races—Individual Dwarfs

QUITE as many stories are current respecting dwarfs, as have been already narrated of their correlatives the giants. But there is not to be noted, in their instance, the same prevalent fancy as to the gradual change which has taken place in the condition of mankind. No one, so far as I am aware, has ever believed that our remote ancestors were persons of insignificant stature, and the human race has been increasing in size in each successive generation. If what was suggested at the outset of the last chapter be correct, it will account for this circumstance. Any way it is certainly the fact. A belief in the existence of dwarf races—men and women whose heads scarcely reached to the waists of persons of ordinary stature—is indeed as ancient as the corresponding idea of whole nations of colossal dimensions. But while the latter, in popular belief, once occupied the whole earth, the former have always been regarded as something exceptional—a kind of *lusus naturæ,* never her ordinary rule. The earliest Greek literature, of which we have any knowledge, tells us of these tiny men. In the third book of the Iliad, Homer relates how the cranes, at the approach of winter, fly away to warmer regions, where they wage war with the pygmy tribes.

> "As when the cranes (he writes),
> Flying the wintry storms, send forth on high
> Their dissonant clamours, while o'er the ocean stream
> They steer their course, and on their pinions bear
> Battle and death to the Pygmæan race." ("Iliad," III.)

Herodotus (II. 32) records that some young men belonging to the tribe of the Nasamones, sent to explore the Libyan deserts, while gathering fruit on a plain, which lay several days' journey south of their own country, were suddenly seized upon by some little men—men (he says) who were even shorter than men of middle size, and carried away.

Aristotle, who is the most precise and careful of all the ancients in the statements he makes, tells us that "the cranes fly away to the lakes above Egypt, from which flows the Nile. There dwell the pygmies, and this is certainly no fable but the pure truth." He adds, "that they had exceedingly small houses, and lived in caves." Hecatæus states that they were so small, that when they reaped their harvests, they had to cut down each separate ear of corn with an axe. Once on a time when Hercules came into their country, after his victory over Antæus, and lay down to sleep, a whole army of them attacked his left hand, while another assailed his right. They are said also to have placed a ladder against the goblet he carried with him, and to have mounted up, in order to drink from it—details from which it is probable that Swift borrowed many of his fancies in his description of Gulliver and the Lilliputians. Hercules is said to have been so pleased with the courage of the little men, that he wrapped up several of them in the lion's skin, and carried them away with him. Pliny, following Strabo and others, writes: "Beyond these (*i.e.*, in the extremest parts of India) the pygmies are said to dwell, who are in height not more than three spans (a little more than two feet). They have a healthful climate, one always germinating, the mountains sheltering them from the North Wind." Aulus Gellius says: "Not far from this spot dwell the pygmies, among whom the tallest do not exceed two feet and a quarter."

Leaving classical writers and proceeding to mediæval times, we are told that in the tenth century Lief, the son of Eric, the Red Headed, sailed in a ship with thirty-five men from old Greenland towards the South-west, and discovered a fertile country abounding in grapes; which, so far as we can judge, must have been either Newfoundland or Labrador, most

probably the latter. Here the Northmen first met with a race of savages, whom they termed "Skrællings" (that is sprouts, or dwarfs,) from their diminutive statures. They described these people as pygmies, two cubits high, who had little boats covered with skins, and bows and arrows with which they assaulted strangers. It is said that the same people soon afterwards made their appearance on the Western coast of Greenland, of which country after it was abandoned, or lost sight of, by the Norwegians, they remained for a long time the only inhabitants. (Prichard, II. 400.)

Sir John Maundeville, three centuries subsequently, tells of "a certain river called Dalay which is the greatest river of fresh water that is in the world. That river goeth through the land of the pygmies, where the folks be of little stature but three span long. And they be right fair and gentle after their quantities, both men and women. And they marry when they are half a year old and have children; and they live not more than six or seven years at the most, and he that liveth eight years, the men hold him to be passing old. These men be the best workers in gold, silver, cotton, silk and all such things, of any other that be in the whole world, and they oftentimes war with the birds of the country, which they take and eat. This little folk neither labour in the fields nor in the vines. But they have great folk among them, men of our stature, that till the land and labour among the vines for them. And of the men of our stature they have always great scorn and wonder, as we should have among us of giants, if there were any among us." (Maundeville, pp. 211, 212.)

In modern times travellers of whose intelligence and truthfulness we can have no doubt, have reported that they met with diminutive races in one quarter of the world or another. Thus for instance the natives of Terra del Fuego are described by Forster as an extremely puny race, contrasting strangely with their neighbours the gigantic Patagonians; though it would rather appear as though they were stunted in their growth by want of wholesome and sufficient food than from any peculiarity of nature. (Forster, "Voyage Round the World."

The Laplanders again—some tribes of them, that is to say, for the Lapps of the highlands approach, within a few inches, the average height of Europeans—are a dwarfish race. They are thus described by a writer of the last century. "The inhabitants (of Russian Lapland) were confusedly known to the ancients under the name of Troglodytes and Northern pygmies, appellations well suited to their stature, which seldom exceeds four feet, and to their living in caves. They are swarthy though other Northern nations are fair; they are little, though their neighbours, and all the inhabitants of Iceland under the Polar circle, are tall. They are nimble and robust; covered with a hard thick skin, which enables them the better to resist cold, and have remarkably small hands and feet as if intended for climbing over a rocky country." The Samoeides also, both the Northern and Southern tribes occupying the shores of the Polar sea and the ranges of the Atlas mountains, are a diminutive people, their height varying apparently from four to five feet. Among the Esquimaux also, if we may trust Arctic travellers, it is very rare to meet with a man who exceeds five feet.

The Bosjemans of Southern Africa are another instance of a race consisting almost uniformly of what we should consider dwarfs. The origin of this people is a point on which travellers are not agreed. By some they are regarded as a branch of the Hottentot race, who either broke away from their fellows, or remained in the state of original barbarism from which the rest of the Hottentots had partially emerged. They are incurably nomadic in their habits, every effort to induce them to lead a settled life having always failed. Some five and thirty years ago two or three specimens of this people were brought to England and carried about for exhibition. Nothing could induce them to sleep under a roof, and it was currently reported—though I believe untruly—that they had been in the first instance caught, like wild animals, in a trap. They were scarcely four feet in height, and their bodily frames were diminutive in proportion. At first sight they seemed to be children of ten years old. It is however probable that in

their case, as in that of the Esquimaux, hardship, together with insufficient and unhealthy food, had in successive generations considerably stunted their growth.

The Aztecs of Central America, one of the aboriginal races from which the Mexicans were descended, are also said to have been of very low stature. Not many years ago, if my memory serves me, some of these also were brought to England for exhibition. There is also said to be a tribe inhabiting the interior of Madagascar, called the Quinos, who are even more diminutive than any of which mention has yet been made, if the tales told of them by voyagers are to be relied on. According to Commerson a female belonging to this people, who was purchased as a slave by the French governor of Fort Dauphin, was only three feet and a half high. Her arms were unusually long in proportion to her height, reaching fully to the knees. But it ought to be added that the very existence of this race has been seriously questioned.

But none of these tribes, whatever may be the truth or falsehood of what has been told respecting them, can be the veritable Pygmies of antiquity, since these latter did not live in Northern Europe, or in Central or Southern America, or in the Kalihari Deserts, but in the heart of Equatorial Africa. Had these Pygmies ever, or have they still, a real existence, or are they the mere creatures of travellers' fancies? The latter supposition was the general belief until quite recently, notwithstanding that the various African nations with whom European travellers came into contact, continued persistently to assert that, deep in the interior of the country this diminutive race continued to dwell. Within the last few years the whole matter has been made clear, and the tradition of twenty-five centuries fully vindicated.

"It was a fascinating thing," writes the German traveller, Dr. Schweinfurth, "to hear the Egyptians confidently relate that, in the land to the south of the Niam-niam country, there dwelt people who never grew to more than three feet in height, and who wore beards so long, as to reach their knees. It was affirmed of them that, armed with long lances, they

would creep under the belly of the elephant, and dexterously kill the beast, managing their own movements so adroitly, that they could not be reached by the creature's trunk."

The reports of these Lilliputian warriors never (he says) found their way into his understanding. But one day his attention was arrested by a shouting in the camp, and he learned that his attendant Mohammed, had surprised one of these pygmies, and was conveying him, in spite of his resistance, to the Doctor's tent. "I looked up," writes Dr. Schweinfurth,

"and there, sure enough, was a strange little creature, perched on Mohammed's right shoulder, nervously hugging his head, and casting glances of alarm in every direction. Mohammed soon deposited him in the seat of honour, and a royal interpreter was stationed at his side."

Eagerly, and without loss of time, the Doctor proceeded to take his portrait, and pressed him with innumerable questions, to which, after some time, he obtained answers. His name was Adimokoo, and he was the head of a small colony located about half a league from the royal residence, and the nation to which he belonged was called Akka. They inhabited large districts to the south, in lat. 2°, part of which was subject to the Monbuttoo king, and part was independent of him.

Anxious to obtain the distinction of possessing a pygmy regiment, the Monbuttoo sovereign had compelled several pygmy families, though against their will, to settle near him, thus exactly reversing the favourite crotchet of Frederick of Prussia, and illustrating anew the old saying, "There is nothing new under the sun."

"I am not likely," adds the Doctor, "to forget a rencontre which I had with several hundred Akka warriors. King Munza's brother was returning to court after a successful campaign, and was accompanied by a large band of soldiers, among whom was a corps of Pygmies. Just as I reached the wide open space in front of the royal halls, I found myself surrounded by what I conjectured to be a crowd of impudent boys, who received me with a sort of bravado fight. My misapprehensions were soon corrected by the Nian-niam people about me. 'They are Tikki-Tikki,' they said. 'You imagine they are but boys, but they are men, and can fight.' "

The Akka would appear to be a branch of that series of dwarf races, which exhibiting all the characteristics of an aboriginal stock, extend along the equator entirely across Africa. Whatever travellers have penetrated into the interior of the continent, have furnished abundant testimony to the mere existence of tribes of singularly diminutive height, while their accounts are nearly all coincident in representing that these dwarf races differ in hardly anything from the surrounding nations, excepting only their size.

Eastern tropical Africa contains these Lilliputian races, no less than does the portion which lies to the west. The Dokos, who dwell on the Juba river, are described by those who have visited the country, as resembling, in point of stature, boys of ten years old. Krapp, the missionary, confirms these statements. "To the south of Kaffa and Susa," he writes, "there is a very sultry and humid country, with many bamboo woods, inhabited by the race called Doko, who are no bigger than boys of ten years old, that is, only four feet high. They have a dark, olive-coloured complexion, and live in a completely savage state. They have thick, protruding lips, flat noses, and

small eyes; the hair is not woolly, and is worn by women over the shoulders. The nails on their hands and feet are allowed to grow like the talons of vultures, and are used in digging for ants, and in tearing to pieces the serpents which they devour raw, for they are unacquainted with the use of fire. As diseases are unknown among them, they die only of old age, or through the assaults of their enemies. " (Krapp's "Travels," 1860.)

"It cannot be decided," he adds, "whether the Dokos are the pygmies, who, according to Herodotus, were discovered near a great river by some youths despatched by Etearchus, the king of the Ammonites. Yet I can bear witness that I heard of these little people not only in Shoa, but also in Ukambani, two degrees to the south, and in Barava, a degree and a half to the north of the equator. At Barava a slave was shown me. He was four feet high, very thick set, dark complexioned, and lively; and the people assured me that he was of the pygmy race of the interior." ("Travels," p. 54.)

Colonel Long confirms this statement. "I had frequently questioned my hosts," he says, "in relation to the Tikki-Tikki or Akka tribes to the southwest. What was my surprise and delight, when Achmet Agha announced that he would shew me a full-grown woman, and accordingly sent at once for her.

"Her appearance struck me with wonder and astonishment. Tikki-Tikki was certainly twenty-five years of age; scarcely four foot high; she was nearly as broad. Her diminutive hands and feet, and well-rounded limbs were strangely at variance with the huge breadth of beam, haunches, and stomach. The eye was large, the nose flat and the tint a bright copper colour." (Long's "Travels," p. 268.)

We have hitherto spoken of the existence of dwarf races, which was for a long series of centuries, even down to our own, a matter of grave doubt among the learned. The question may now be regarded as being determined in the affirmative, the only fault with which travellers of an older date are chargeable, being that they have represented their little men as being about a foot shorter than is the actual fact. Yet even

here it is likely that their reports were given in perfect good faith, only that they inferred the height of a whole tribe, from what were in reality one or two exceptional specimens. It may be shewn beyond dispute, that individual cases have been met with, of persons whose stature did not exceed that of the oft-described Pygmies of the earliest writers.

The first well-authenticated instance of this kind, of which I am aware, occurs in the "Octavius" of Suetonius (chap. 43.) The historian there speaks of the exhibition at the public shows of one Lucius; a young man of noble birth, who was under two feet in stature, weighed only seventeen pounds, and had a tremendous voice.

I say the first "well-authenticated case," because that of the poet Philetus, who lived nearly three centuries before Lucius's date, can hardly be called well-authenticated, notwithstanding Ælian's testimony. We are not informed what was Philetus's exact height, and the extravagant story told of his having been obliged to attach leaden weights to the soles of his shoes, in order to save himself from being carried away by the wind, sounds like a jest of a comic poet, which has been understood literally.

Conopas, the dwarf and favourite of Julia, niece of the Emperor Augustus, was nearly contemporary with Lucius. Pliny reports his height as having been two feet and a span. Varro, he tells us, mentions two Roman knights, Manius Maximus, and M. Tullius, who were each two cubits high, and, he adds, he himself has seen them in their coffins.

In more recent times, the practice was still kept up of having court-dwarfs, who, like the court-jesters, enlivened the tedium of the royal leisure. Peter the great, diverted himself by celebrating the marriage of a pygmy man and woman. The whole of the court, as well as the foreign ambassadors, were invited to be present. All the dwarfs, male and female, who lived within two hundred miles of St. Petersburg were required to attend, and no less than seventy sat down to dinner. Everything was provided on a scale exactly proportioned to the dimensions of the guests—a low table and chairs, a tiny dinner-

service and glasses, small joints and loaves, &c. After dinner there was a ball which was opened by the bridegroom, who was exactly three feet two inches high. The company, who at first had assembled only under compulsion, are said in the end greatly to have enjoyed themselves.

The king of court-dwarfs however was Sir Jeffery Hudson, whom Sir Walter Scott has introduced with so much effect in his novel of "Peveril of the Peak." Up to the age of thirty, this singular specimen of humanity was only 18 inches in height. He then grew until he reached three feet nine; but never exceeded that, although he lived to be more than sixty. Scott gives a graphic picture of him in his later years. "Although a dwarf of the least possible size," writes Sir Walter, "there was nothing positively ugly in his countenance or actually distorted in his limbs. His head, hands, and feet, were indeed large, and disproportioned to the height of his body, and his body itself much thicker than was consistent with symmetry, but in a degree, which was rather ludicrous, than disagreeable to look upon. His countenance, in particular, had he been a little taller, would have been accounted in youth handsome, and now in age, striking and expressive. It was but the uncommon disproportion between the head and the trunk, which made the features seem whimsical and *bizarre*—an effect which was considerably increased by the dwarf's mustaches, which it was his pleasure to wear so large, that they almost twisted back amongst, and mingled with, his grizzled hair." ("Peveril of the Peak," VI. 63.)

He was the subject of endless amusement at the court of his royal mistress; practical jokes being continually played off upon him, but with small regard to his personal feelings. Whether he was ever really enclosed in a pasty and served up at King Charles's table, as described by Scott, is doubtful, though there appears no question but that such an incident did take place at the Court of the Duke of Würtemburg. It is also most positively stated that he had once to enact the part of a cat sewed up in a real cat's skin; and on another occasion figured in a masque with the king's gigantic porter

Evans; who at one point of the exhibition drew him forth from his pocket.

These two latter occurrences, if real, must have taken place before he had attained his thirtieth year, and was only one foot six high. A mannikin of that stature might be included in a cat's skin, or a tall man's pocket, but not one of three feet nine.

He was a man of courage and spirit withal, and often angrily resented the liberties taken with him, when he himself was not inclined to join in the joke. He commanded a troop of horse during the civil wars, and while residing in France, killed a man in a duel, in requital of an affront offered him. Sir Walter has referred to this occurrence also. The unfortunate man in question was a certain Mr. Crofts, the son of Sir Montagu Crofts. He offended Hudson, by telling some ridiculous anecdote of him, and when the latter sent him a challenge, he appeared on the ground, armed with a boy's squirt, instead of a pistol. Sir Jeffery thereupon addressed language to him, which necessitated the employment of more dangerous weapons, and Crofts fell mortally wounded at the first fire.

Hudson survived the civil wars, and was among those accused by Oates of being concerned in the Popish plot. He was confined in the Gate House prison, where he died at the age of sixty-three. He had led, on the whole, a stirring life, for besides the share he took in the civil wars, he was on one occasion taken prisoner by the Turks. Fond as they are of such natural curiosities, it is a wonder they ever allowed him to return home. On this occasion the story ran that his captors, not knowing in what other manner to employ him, obliged him to be in bed all day and hatch turkey's eggs. The least allusion to this always roused his wrath to the utmost, hence it may be concluded that there was some truth in it. Hudson was painted by Vandyke, and it is said that his clothes were preserved as curiosities in Sloane's Museum.

M. Dauberton in his *"Histoire Naturelle"* has given an elaborate history of Nicolas Perry, a dwarf to whom the name of "Bebe" was given, and who passed the greater portion of his life at the court of Stanislaus, the titular king of Poland.

"Bebe" was a native of Plaine in France, and was born A. D. 1741. His parents were stout, hardy peasants, of the ordinary stature of men. At his birth he was so small that he weighed only one pound and a quarter. He was brought on a plate to the font to be baptized, and his cradle was a slipper. His mouth was so small that his mother was unable to suckle him, and a she-goat, which chanced to have kids at the time, had to be substituted for her. At two years old he was able to walk alone, and his first pair of shoes were an inch and a half long. In his infancy he was the subject of several of the disorders incident to children, and the small-pox left some marks of its ravages upon him. For the first six years of his life he continued an inmate of his father's cottage, eating the ordinary coarse food of the peasantry, and receiving the same education as the children in the same village, which (it need scarcely be said) was scanty enough. But at the age of six he attracted the notice of King Stanislaus. He was then fifteen inches high, and, strange to say, well proportioned and handsome—resembling in fact a very beautiful doll. He was also strong and healthy, though his mental powers were always of the feeblest. He was nevertheless a very attractive plaything, and Stanislaus had him conveyed to his palace at Lunenville, where he passed the remainder of his days.

The change of life, from the hard fare and numberless privations of a peasant life, to a state of ease and even luxury, did not seem in any way to affect either his bodily or his mental condition. His bodily health continued to be good; but either he was without ordinary intellectual ability, or the system of education pursued failed to bring it out. He could not be got to comprehend the elementary tenets of religion, or the simplest reasoning process. An attempt was made to teach him music and dancing, but it totally failed. He was, however, easily provoked to anger by any imagined affront, and to jealousy if he fancied others preferred to him.

At the age of sixteen he was two feet five inches in height, and he never grew any taller. Indeed it seemed as though that age was his climacteric, and he began to grow rapidly old,

when it was passed. He lost the symmetry of shape for which he had been so remarkable, and became deformed and feeble. One of his shoulders grew to be higher than the other; he contracted a stoop, and could hardly support himself on his legs. By the time he was twenty he exhibited all the symptoms of decrepit old age. He died at the age of twenty-two as completely worn out, as other men are at four times that period.

Count Borulaski, a Polish nobleman, is a still more modern instance. He was a gentleman of birth, courage, and ability; and had more than one son who was of the ordinary stature of man. But he himself was only three feet three inches high, and he had a sister who reached only to his armpit, and could hardly, therefore, have been more than two feet six in stature.

The skeleton of Mademoiselle Crachami, a Sicilian, is preserved in the Museum of the College of Surgeons. It is only twenty inches in height; but it should be mentioned that the girl died when only ten years old, and the bones appear to have undergone hardly any change since birth, there having been apparently a complete arrest of development.

The "Encyclopædia Britannica" mentions one more case, though without specifying any particulars, that of one Birch, an Englishman. If the person named lived to manhood, it is one of the most remarkable instances on record, as he never attained a greater height than one foot eight inches.

To the above list must be added that of General Tom Thumb and the two "American Midgets," General Mite and Lucia Zarate.

Chapter XVI

Fabulous Men—Wild Men—Hairy Men —Men with Tails—Loup-Garous—Vampires

GIANTS and dwarfs are, after all, very harmless monsters. The first named may for a moment awaken alarm; but they are soon found to be very quiet, usually rather dull, members of society. The men who have worked the most terrible woe to their fellow-men—the Julius Cæsars, Attilas, and Napoleon Buonapartes, who drowned the world in blood—were, nearly all, little men. The giants of the child's story-book need to be embellished with additional terrors, to be endued with two or more heads, to carry clubs spiked with steel, and to devour their victims alive, in order to excite the due amount of interest. Men who are but "children of a larger growth" seem to have required the same stimulants; and the old travellers, accordingly, were fain occasionally to adorn their narratives with particulars of monsters, strange of aspect and irresistible in strength and cunning, which may match with the Cormorans and Blunderbores of the nursery tale. Arimaspians and Cyclopes, beings with only one eye, and that in the middle of the forehead, are described even by sober historians, as creatures which, notwithstanding their strangeness, might have had a real existence. The former of these prodigious races were supposed to be continually warring with a huge species of birds called Gryphons; the subject of the contention being the gold dust abounding in their country—though how the article in dispute could have been regarded by the birds, as of any

value to them, it is hard to understand. Here, in all likelihood, the information given to travellers, as for instance to Herodotus, was founded on vague rumours respecting two warlike nations, one of which wore helmets, in which there was a round opening in front, just large enough to allow the wearer to see his antagonist; resembling, in fact, the visors of mediæval knights. This, to a casual observer, might give the impression of a single eye in the middle of the forehead. In much the same manner, the barbarous inhabitants of Manicolo described La Perouse and his men, who had been wrecked on their island, as "men who had noses half a yard long"—the cocked hats of the French soldiers having given them that idea. The Gryphons, again, were probably described as having the heads and wings of eagles, and the bodies of lions, because they wore helmets fashioned after the shape of an eagle—the favourite device with the Northmen—and buff coats made of the hides of lions.

The Cyclopes, again, represented as the sons of Heaven and Earth, and called the "Bright one," "Bronte," and "Sterope," can hardly have been conceived with any other idea, but that of representing the sun, the thunder, and the lightning. The single round eye was in all likelihood applied, in the first instance, to the eldest of the three only—the sun, called by poets in all languages "the Eye of God." In later times, the Cyclopes was declared to be the son of Neptune—doubtless because the sun was believed in the earlier ages of the world to rise out of the ocean in the morning, and return to his father's house at night.

It was the same with the Centaurs, the Lamiæ, the Gorgons, the Sirens, and many other monsters—of what seems to us a mere distempered fancy. The Centaurs are generally thought to have been the first human kind who rode on horseback, and whose appearance, if seen from a distance, might well give a stranger the notion that the marvellous creature he beheld was half horse and half man. But those, I think, are more happy in their explanation, who suggest that the practice of lassoing wild bulls, pursued by the first riders on horse-

back, gave rise at once to the name and the description. The Lamiæ, beautiful women in the face and upper portions of their persons, and serpents below, who devoured children, and sucked the blood of young men, whom they allured by their blandishments,—are doubtless the creatures of allegory, nearly resembling the Lurlines of mediæval fancy. The Gorgons, represented as three hideous women, with serpents for hair, wings and claws of brass, with bodies covered with serpents' scales, and eyes a single glance of which turned the spectators to stone,—are accounted for much in the same manner as the Arimaspians before mentioned. It has been suggested that the three sisters denoted three warlike tribes banded together. The serpents were the plumes of their helmets; the scales, wings, and claws, their brazen armour; the stony glance of their eyes, their savage and truculent appearance; while Perseus, who is described as wearing a helmet which rendered him invisible, was simply a neighbouring chief, who overcame them by a sudden attack, when they were off their guard, engaged in feasting.

Passing from the realms of myth and fable, we come to those eccentricities of nature, which travellers profess to have really fallen in with—wild men, hairy men, and men with tails. There has always existed a belief that man was originally a wild animal, and has been gradually reclaimed from this condition to his present civilized state. He presently learned to speak, and the language so acquired was of course [1] the parent of all others. It is contended that, if young children should be lost in wild countries, and able to find sustenance for themselves, they would grow up mere animals in

[1] Attempts have been actually made to discover what this primitive language was. Psammetichus, King of Egypt, shut up two infants in an empty hovel, and caused them to be suckled by goats. After two years or so they were heard to cry "bek, bek." This is the Phrygian word for bread, and it was therefore concluded that the Phrygian was the primitive language. How they could know anything about bread, an article they had never seen or heard of, does not appear to have occurred to anyone. Doubtless "bek" was an imitation of the cry of the goats. In comparatively modern times, the same ridiculous experiment was made by James IV. of Scotland, who shut up two children in the island of Inch Keith, with a dumb attendant to look after them. When they came to the age of speech, they are reported to have talked pure Hebrew!

human shape. One or two specimens of these "wild men" are said to have been found.

In the summer of 1724 an inhabitant of Hameln found in a field a boy apparently about twelve years old, with black hair and a swarthy complexion, and entirely naked, though there was a fragment of some linen stuff hanging round his neck. He was taken into the town and inquiries made about him, but with no result. He was found to be a perfect savage. He fed on raw vegetables, grass, and the peelings of sticks. When anything was offered to him, by way of food, he would smell it, and if it pleased him, would slap himself on the breast; or if he disliked it, shake his head. He could not at first endure clothes and in particular resisted the wearing of caps or shoes. He was sent for by King George I., by whom he was brought to England and placed under the care of the celebrated Dr. Arbuthnot, who took a good deal of pains with him, but could do little for his improvement. He was placed with a farmer in Hertfordshire, with whom he lived till his death in 1785.

In the forests of Aveyron in Guienne, in the year 1801, a child apparently eleven or twelve years old, was one day found by some hunters, who seized him as he was on the point of climbing a tree to escape from them. He had been seen several times previously, and was known to sustain life by feeding on roots and acorns. He was stark naked; could only utter a kind of guttural sound, and to all appearance could not distinguish one sound from another. He was taken to a village in the neighbourhood, and placed under the care of a woman, but he soon made his escape to the mountains, where he remained without clothing during the whole of a severe winter. He was recaptured some months afterwards, and conveyed to a hospital, where every effort was made to instruct and civilise him. But these had but little success. His demeanour was like that of a wild beast in a menagerie. He continually swung himself to and fro, bit and scratched those who came near him, shewed no sense of thankfulness for kind usage, and appeared incapable of fixing his attention

on any object. He always required to be carefully watched, lest he should make his escape, confinement being especially distasteful to him. He remained in the hospital throughout 1801; but in the year 1802 he was conveyed to Paris, and placed under the surveillance of Dr. Itard, physician to the Hospital for the Deaf and Dumb in that city; who after several months of skilful treatment, succeeded in some degree in ameliorating his condition.

There can be little doubt that these two unfortunate boys were idiots from their births; and it was the accident of their having been lost in the woods, or cruelly turned out of their homes by their parents, that occasioned their apparently wild condition. Children exposed in this manner, and possessed of the ordinary faculties of man, if they did not perish from cold and hunger, would display the gift of reason as other men do, and would in all likelihood attach themselves to the first community of their own species with which they might come into contact. The power of speech of course they could not possess until they had learned it, as we all learn it, from our fellow-men. But they would acquire it as soon as they had the opportunity. Nothing is more certain than that man is not intended by nature for either a wild or a solitary condition. His mental and physical structure alike render either state impossible to him.

Closely connected with supposed "wild men" are the "hairy men," with which travellers assure us that they have fallen in. They are said to be covered from head to foot with bristles like any animals of the forest. The reader will doubtless remember the "little hairy men" of Sindbad's third voyage, and the notices from the Arabian traveller El Kazweenee, and the Englishman Marsden, which were cited when that voyage was under consideration. But besides these, there are several travellers who make very nearly the same assertion. Odoric's editor, Ramusio, describes among the rare curiosities of the Great Khan's court, "wild men and women all hairy, with long grey hair, though of human form" (Odoric II. p. 137). A French writer, quoted by Colonel Yule, declares

that he saw a group of these little people in the district of Andragiri (a portion of the eastern coast of Sumatra) and was told by his informants that they inhabited the interior of Menangkabau, where they formed a small tribe. Other writers, as for instance Friar Jordanus, make the same assertion. We might be disposed to suspect that these statements were merely repetitions, made without much inquiry, of some palpable imposture which had in the first instance been foisted upon some unwary traveller, if it were not for the great probability that these same "little hairy men" were in reality apes, which had been honestly mistaken for human kind. Marco Polo tells us that it was a regular practice in his time to bring home such hairy men from India, but that "they were all a lie and a cheat." "These little men, as they call them," he writes, "are manufactured on the island, and I will tell you how. You see there is on the island a kind of monkey which is very small, and has a face like a man's. They take these and pluck out all the hair, except the hair of the beard and on the breast, and then dry them and stuff them, and daub them with saffron till they look like men" (Polo II. p. 228).

But though no evidence can be produced of the existence of tribes of "little hairy men," yet—exactly as was found the case in the instance of giants and dwarfs—individual specimens do occasionally occur. Here is one attested in such a manner as to preclude all doubt. In Colonel Yule's "Mission to the Court of Ava," he gives the following extraordinary report: "To-day we had a singular visitor. This was Maphoon, the daughter of Shae-Maory, the hairy man, described and depicted in Crawford's narrative, where also a portrait of her as a young child appears. Not expecting such a visitor, we started and exclaimed, as there entered what at first appeared to be an absolute realization in the flesh of the Dog-headed Anubis.

"The whole of Maphoon's face was, more or less, covered with hair. On a part of the cheek, and between the nose and

the mouth, this was confined to a short down, but over all the rest of the face was a thick silky hair of a brown colour, paling about the nose and chin, and 4 or 5 inches long. At the alæ of the nose, under the eye and on the cheekbone, this was fully developed. But it was in and on the ear, that it was most extraordinary. Except the extreme upper tip, no part of the ear was visible. All the rest was filled and veiled by a large mass of silky hair, growing apparently out of every part of the external organ, and hanging in a pendent lock to a length of 8 or 10 inches. The hair over her forehead was brushed so as to blend with the hair of the head. The nose was densely covered with hair, as no animal's is, that I know of; and with the long fine locks curling out and pendent, like the wisps of a fine skye terrier's coat, had a most strange appearance. The beard was pale in colour, about 4 inches in length, seeming very soft and silky. The neck, bosom, and arms appeared to be covered with a fine pale down, scarcely visible in some lights."

Two stories are told respecting the disposal of this woman's hand in marriage—one that an Italian wanted to marry her, and take her with him to Europe, where doubtless the exhibition of her would have been a source of considerable profit. But this, very properly, was not permitted. Perhaps in consideration of the loss of her foreign suitor, the King of Ava is said to have offered a reward to anyone who would marry her. It was long before a suitor could be found either bold or avaricious enough, to avail himself of the offer; though it appeared that at last she had obtained a husband.

A somewhat similar case is mentioned by Marignoli. "The most Noble Emperor, Charles IV.," he tells us, "brought from Tuscany a girl, whose face, as well as her whole body, was covered with hair, so that she looked like the daughter of a fox." The same statement is made by another Italian writer, Matteo Villani; who says, that "when the Emperor was at Pietra Santa, on his return from his coronation at Rome, there was presented to him a female child of seven,

all woolly, like a sheep, as if with a wool badly dyed of a red colour, and covered with this to the extremities of the lips and eyelids. The Empress, marvelling at such a phenomenon, entrusted the child to her damsels, and took it to Germany." ("Cathay," &c. II. 379.)

Garcilasso de la Vega relates that one Pedro Serrano, a Spanish sailor, who had been exposed for several years to the heat of a tropical sun, without shelter, on some barren islands off the Peruvian coast, was, before the end of his stay there, covered from head to foot with hair and bristles, like an ourang-outang. In this state he was presented to the Emperor Charles V., who settled a pension on him.

The existence of men with tails is asserted by a number of writers of different ages and countries with a degree of confidence, which is, to say the least of it, very remarkable. Ctesias speaks of tailed men, "who are to be found in an island somewhere in the Indian Sea." Ptolemy places the "Isle of Satyrs," with its inhabitants, endued with tails, in the same regions. Pliny tells us of men "with bushy tails and extraordinary swiftness of foot." ("Nat. Hist." VII. 2.)

Among the Asiatics, the belief in "Tailed men" is very general.

Galvano heard that there were, on a certain island, men which had tails like unto sheep. The King of Tidore told him of another such a tribe on the Isle of Batochina. The Chinese have similar stories of a people in a mountain above Canton. Mr. St. John in Borneo met with a trader, who had seen and *felt* the tails of such a race, inhabiting the north-east coast of that island. The appendage in question was four inches long, and very stiff; and the people all used perforated seats—such as Lord Monboddo is said to have insisted on his daughters making use of—doubtless, in order that if, by any unexpected chance, the original formation should be restored, the seats might be ready.

Struys, the Dutch traveller, informs us that "before he visited the island (Formosa), in 1677, he had often heard that there were men there, who had long tails like brute beasts.

But he had never been able to believe it. Nor (he adds) would he believe it now, but for a strange adventure, which proved it beyond possibility of doubt. Being out one day with a party of friends, who were taking a stroll about the island, one of the number strayed away from the rest for a short distance. Some time having elapsed without his return, they went in search of him, and to their horror, found his mangled body lying on the ground. They went in pursuit of the murderer, and presently encountered a man of peculiar appearance; who, finding himself surrounded, began to foam with

rage, and threaten anyone who should attempt to meddle with him. He was seized and confessed the deed; whereupon he was condemned to be burned alive, and was fastened to a stake for that purpose. "It was then," says Struys, "that I beheld what I had never thought to see. The man had a tail, more than a foot long, covered with red hair, and very much like that of a cow. When he saw the surprise that this discovery created among the European spectators, he informed us that his tail was the effect of climate, for that all the inhabitants of the southern side of the island were provided with the like appendage." (Struys's "Voyages.")

The same story is told by African travellers. Horneman

reports, that between the Bight of Benin and Abyssinia, there were tailed men, who went by the name of Niam-niam. De Castelnau gives some particulars about them. "While the Niams were sleeping in the sun," he says, "the Haoussas approached, and falling on them, massacred them to the last man. They had, all of them, tails forty centimetres long, and from two to three in diameter." Even so late as 1861, Dr. Wolf asserts, that "there are men and women in Abyssinia with tails like dogs." (Wolf's "Travels," Vol. II.)

Dr. Hubsch, physician to the hospital at Constantinople, relates, that in the year 1852, he saw, for the first time, a tailed negress. He describes the tail as being about two inches long, smooth and hairless, and terminating in a point. "The woman was as black as ebony, her hair was frizzled, her teeth white, large, and planted in sockets, which inclined considerably outwards. I questioned the slave-dealer. I learned from him, that there exists a tribe called Niam-niam, occupying the interior of Africa. All the members of this tribe bear the caudal appendage: and as the native imagination is given to exaggeration, I was assured that the tails sometimes attained the length of two feet." (Quoted by Mr. Gould.)

All quarters of the world appear to concur in declaring that men with tails are not only possibilities, but facts. The men of Kent, in the 12th century, were universally reputed to possess this undesirable adjunct, as a punishment for the affront they had offered to Thomas à Becket, in cutting off his horse's tail at Strood Bridge. The men of Dorsetshire, according to Bale, were compelled to bear the same ignoble badge, for having cast fish-tails at St. Augustine. A steadfast Devonshire tradition—I know not for what reason—fastens the same reproach on the men of Cornwall. Early in the Middle Ages, foreigners assigned this singular mark of distinction to *all* Englishmen alike. In the romance of Cœur de Lion, the King of Cyprus is made to say:—

> "Out, Tayllards, of my palace,
> Now go and say to your tayled king
> That I owe him nothing."

I am not sure, after all, that the ridicule which generally attaches to a *tailor* in England, is not due, less to the (presumed) effeminacy of being a maker of garments, than to the supposed presence of this caudal ornament.[2] It would seem that the prejudice entertained against the English on this score, was at one time very great. Bale complains that Englishmen cannot travel in another land, by way of merchandise or any other honest occupation, but it is most contumeliously thrown in his teeth, that all Englishmen have tails!

An equally strange, but more horrible monster, was the *Loup-garou,* or *wehr-wolf;* of which such grim use has been made by the writers of fiction. To record the hundredth part of the cases, in which men have been accused, and condemned to death at the stake, as being men-wolves, would be impossible. Two or three examples, however, may be chosen, which will give a sufficient idea of all. There was indeed a terribly close resemblance between all such cases. A man was supposed, at certain times, to assume the form of a wolf, and kill and mangle all whom he met. After which he returned to his human shape.

In the year 1573, one Gilles Garnier, a native of Lyons, was indicted as a *loup-garou,* who prowled about at night, and devoured little children. It was sworn that on four occasions, three times in the shape of a wolf, and once in that of a man, he had seized, killed, and mangled children. On the fourth occasion he was seen to strangle a boy, and tear his flesh with his teeth. He was put on the rack, confessed the truth of the charge, and was burned at the stake.

In 1588, a gentleman of Auvergne was informed by a man just returned from hunting, that he had been attacked by a savage wolf, from which he had freed himself by cutting off its paw with his hunting-knife. He drew the paw out from

[2] A tailor is an unlucky man. His supposed want of manhood is due, at all events in some measure, to the popular proverb, "Nine tailors make a man." But this has no reference to "*tailors*" at all. It should be "nine *tellers* make a man." When the passing-bell was sounded for the dead,—if the deceased was a child, three strokes were given, at the close of the toll, to signify the fact; if a woman, six; if a man, nine. These strokes were called "tellers." Nine tellers therefore made a man, *i.e.* denoted that it was a man, who was dead.

his wallet as he spoke, and, lo, it was no wolf's foot, but a woman's hand with a wedding ring on the finger, which the Auvergnese recognised as his wife's wedding ring! He went straight home, and found his wife with her apron thrown over her arm. This being removed, it was seen that her hand had been recently cut off. She was tried, and burned.

In 1718 in Caithness, a woman named Nancy Gilbert, upwards of seventy years old, was indicted for having, in the shape (this time) of a black cat, injured and annoyed a carpenter, named Montgomery. He had been persecuted (he said) for a long time past by witches, who had taken the forms of cats, until one day he rushed into the yard, where they were assembled, and with an axe and a sword wounded several of them. Two old women had died shortly afterwards, and recently inflicted wounds were found on their bodies. Nancy was found in bed with a broken leg, and Montgomery declared he had struck one of the cats a blow on the leg, which anyway *ought* to have broken it. The maidservant swore that she had heard the cats talking, with human voices, to one another. The old woman explained, clearly enough, how her leg had been broken, but that availed her nothing. With inconceivable brutality, she was put on the rack, broken leg and all, confessed everything charged against her, and the next day died of the treatment she had undergone!

These three are fairly representative cases. As regards the last, it is obvious that the whole originated in the crazy fancy of the carpenter. He had, no doubt, really wounded the cats, and his alarm converted accidental cuts and scratches on the corpses of the old women, into the traces of his blows. In the second case, one is inclined to believe that the lady must have been the victim of some deep-laid villainy. Her hand may have been cut off, when repelling some outrage, and produced by her assailant, in revenge for his rebuff, as the evidence of a story of his own invention. Many such indictments were, beyond doubt, the coinage of private malice.

But the remaining case is not so clear. The man—it was alleged, and not denied—was seen to strangle the boy, attempt to tear the body. It is not unlikely that he did both. Advanced science has recognised such diseases as homicidal, and cleptomania, which our fathers treated simply as murder and theft. Among more recently acknowledged maladies is one, which incites those, of whom it takes possession, to tear and mutilate the bodies of the dead, and sometimes of the living. Several cases of the kind have been recognised, and treated with complete success by eminent physicians. Among many others, the case of the man Baker, who in 1868, killed and mangled a little girl, named Susan Adams, without any apparent motive, may be cited as having in all likelihood been an instance of genuine lycanthropy.

Another as monstrous, and still more hideous, fancy, is that of Vampirism, the return, that is to say, of the dead to earth to suck the blood of the living! The superstition is of ancient date and is found in many Eastern countries; but of late years Hungary and Greece have been the chief theatres of it. About the middle of the last century there was a violent outbreak of this horrible belief. A peasant named Paul had died in a Hungarian village, having been run over by a hay-cart. Not long afterwards several other persons belonging to the same village died in a strange and sudden manner. It was remembered that Paul had complained once of having been persecuted by vampires, and it was therefore believed, according to the current superstition, that he had himself in his turn become a vampire, and caused the death of his neighbours. His body was disinterred, when it was found to exhibit all the recognised signs of vampirism. The complexion was fresh, the hair and nails had recently grown, the body was full of blood! The usual process was gone through: a stake was thrust through the heart, and then the body was burnt to ashes, which were thrown into a river. This did not quiet the panic. It was thought that Paul had sucked the bodies of several of those who had recently deceased, and therefore they too had become vampires. As many as forty

corpses were disinterred and burned, and even then the general terror was with difficulty allayed.

The history of one of these cases is the history of a hundred others. The infatuation, childish and degrading as it is, seems nevertheless to have been acquiesced in by persons of education and intelligence. How hideous a bondage is superstition! Who is really free in this world, except he whom the Truth has made so!

STRANGE BEASTS

Chapter XVII

Fabulous Beasts—The Unicorn—Behemoth—Auroch—Irish Elk—Gorilla

THE fancies of some ancient writers, and especially the fancy of Pliny, teemed with all manner of strange monsters, each more hideous and *bizarre* than the last—chimæras with three heads, a dragon's, a goat's, and a lion's, continually vomiting flames; sphinxes, with the head and arms of a girl, the body of a dog, the wings of a bird, the claws of a lion, and the tail of a snake; pegasuses, or winged horses, also to be met with in Eastern romance; crocottæ, and leucrocottæ, creatures half-dogs and half-wolves—or, as some would have it, half-lions and half-hyænas—which were said to imitate to perfection the human voice, and so deceive travellers; mantichoræ, frightful figures, with human heads containing three rows of teeth, the bodies of lions, and tails that emitted a sting like scorpions', having voices also which resembled the mingled melody of fifes and trumpets. These and many others are described in the Eighth Book of Pliny's "Natural History." There are also the gigantic monsters of Scandinavian and Hindoo mythology—the hideous human wolf Fenris, the immeasurable serpent Midgard, or the Aullays again—prodigious horses with elephants' trunks, bearing the same proportion to an elephant which an elephant does to a sheep, and which Southey has introduced into his poem of "The Curse of Kehama":

"The Aullays, hugest of four-footed kind,
The Aullay horse, that in his force
With elephantine trunk could bind
And lift the elephant, and on the wind
Whirl him away, with sway and swing
E'en like a pebble from the practised sling."

There is again the "Dun Cow" of our own islands, the terror of the Warwickshire hinds, said to have been slain by Earl Guy: and once more, the creature described by Purchas which (he tells us) "resembles a wolf, save that his legs and feet are like to a man's, and so foolish that with the help of a song and a tabor, they which know his haunts will bring him out of his den and captivate his ear with music (as Purchas quaintly remarks) while another captivateth his legs with a rope."

Of these there is plenty for those who choose to search them out; but they are all creatures of legend and fable, and hardly concern the subject we have in hand. There are, however, animals which claim to have a real existence, but whose existence is nevertheless very dubious, and their identity with any known animal very difficult to establish. Foremost among these must be reckoned the unicorn—the creature which, since the days of James the First, has held so distinguished a place as one of the supporters of the Royal Arms of England.

The unicorn is several times mentioned in Holy Scripture. "My horn shall be exalted like the horn of an unicorn," writes David in the Book of Psalms. "He hath as it were the strength of an unicorn," is Balaam's simile in the Book of Numbers. "Will the unicorn be willing to serve thee?" is the question asked by the Lord of Job, when He would remind him of his impotence. In these and other passages most commentators have identified it with the rhinoceros or the reem, some few with the wild goat. Another notion has been put forward, much more recently, which supposes the gemsbok of Southern Africa to be the animal meant; because though the gemsbok has two straight horns, they are set so close together, that from a short distance they seem to be

only one. It should indeed be noted that, though the creature is called an *uni*corn, in more than one passage two horns are ascribed to it: as *e.g.*, Deut. xxxiii. 17, "His horns are like the horns of an unicorn," and Psalm xxii. 21, "Thou hast heard me between the horns of the unicorn," where our translators have rendered "the horns of the uni*corns*," altering the original in order to avoid the apparent contradiction. But allowing all weight to this and other arguments which have been urged, the description given of the unicorn by travellers and naturalists does not accord at all accurately with any of the four animals above named. It will be best to particularise what has been said respecting it.

Herodotus appears to be the first who has mentioned it—that is supposing that the "horned ass" of Africa (which he distinguished from the "wild asses" of that country,) is the same as the unicorn. But that is, at best, a doubtful point.

Ctesias, however, a century or so after him, speaks more definitely. He calls the creature "the wild ass of India," and describes it as being equal in size to a horse, in some instances larger, with a white body, a red head, bluish eyes, and a straight horn on the forehead, a cubit long. The lower part of this horn he represents as being white, the middle black, and the tip red. Drinking-cups were made of it; and these, like the Venetian glass, were believed to possess the power of neutralising poison when poured into them. Nay, it was affirmed that if a draught of water or wine was taken in them after imbibing poison, it would counteract the mischief. Ctesias represents the unicorn as extraordinarily swift of foot, untameable, and almost impossible of capture. Other naturalists, Aristotle, Strabo, &c., give accounts very nearly corresponding with the above.

Cæsar describes an animal—a quadruped, inhabiting the great Hercynian forests, which, he says, is of the bulk of an ox, and the figure of a deer, and from the middle of whose forehead a single horn stands out, higher and straighter than any horn known to him. He adds that from the top of this

horn, branches like those of a palm spread out ("De Bell. Gall." VI. 20).

Pliny represents the unicorn as a ferocious beast with the body of a horse, the head of a deer, the feet of an elephant, the tail of a wild boar, and a single *black* horn two cubits long, standing out of its forehead. This creature was never produced in the Roman amphitheatres, notwithstanding the rage for the exhibition of strange animals which prevailed at Rome for several centuries, and which one emperor after another exerted himself to the utmost to gratify. Its non-appearance has been attributed by some to the fact before alleged, that it was found impossible to capture it; but by others to the simpler reason that such an animal never existed (N. H. VIII. 31).

Such is the ancient testimony on this subject. The modern is not less remarkable. Cardan describes it as a rare animal, the size of a horse, with hair like that of a weasel and the head of a deer, on which there grows one horn, three cubits in length, large at the lower part and tapering towards the end. A strange fable was told in the middle ages respecting it, that, although it was impossible to hunt it down, it was so impressed by the presence of a pure and lovely virgin, that it would run up to her and submissively lay its head in her lap. This legend is preserved by Marco Polo, but his editor, Colonel Yule, affirms that the unicorn was supposed to be attracted not by the lady's beauty or chastity, but by the perfumes with which her dress was scented—a terrible come down, so far as the romance of the story is concerned.

Evelyn says that the Monoceros is as big as a full-sized horse, with a mane and yellow woolly hair, of great swiftness, with feet like an elephant, and a tail like a wild boar. It has a black horn growing between its eyebrows. This is not smooth, but with natural twistings and is very sharp at the point. It utters loud harsh sounds. It lives peaceably with other animals, but quarrels with those of its own kind—the males even destroying the females; except at breeding times,

when the animals are gregarious. At other times they live in solitude and wild regions.

It may be said of many of these writers that they simply repeat each other's assertions, without inquiry of their own. But this is not, at all events, always the case. Peter Martyr gives an account of an animal drawn from his own observation in Africa, which bears a remarkable resemblance to the supposed monoceros or unicorn. "The lands and desolate pastures of these regions," he says, "are inhabited and devoured of wild and terrible beasts, as lions, tigers, and such like other

monsters, as we now know, and have been described of old authors in times past. But there is specially one beast engendered here, in which nature has endeavoured to show her cunning. This beast is as big as an ox, armed with a long snout like an elephant, and yet no elephant; of the colour of an ox, and yet no ox; with the hoof of a horse, and yet no horse; with ears also like those of an elephant, but not so open, and not so much hanging down, yet much wider than the ears of any other beast." The descriptions above given do not, we must repeat, accord with what is known of any of the animals commonly identified with the unicorn. It may be added that some travellers profess, not simply to have

heard particulars from others, who had been eye-witnesses of the creature and its habits, but to have seen it themselves, and describe peculiarities belonging to no other animal. Ludovicus Varlomannus (quoted in "Penny Cycl.") says he saw two sent to the Sultan from Ethiopia, and kept in a repository in Mahomet's tomb at Mecca. There is one feature also in the accounts given by modern, though not noticed by ancient, writers, which seem to mark the animal off from all others. This is the flexibility of its horn. Garcias says its horn resembles in this respect the trunk of an elephant. It can raise or depress it, turn it to the left or the right at pleasure.

In Jonston's "Naturalis Historia," it is similarly depicted. The animal is represented sometimes with its horn raised, solid and firm, sometimes flaccid and hanging down. Many others give the same description, and notably among them Dr. Andrew Smith, an eminent South African Zoologist, who has collected a great many particulars relative to a quadruped with one horn on his forehead, which cannot be identified with either the rhinoceros or the reem.

Dr. Smith cites from Mr. Freeman, a missionary in Madagascar, the particulars communicated to the latter by a native of the region lying to the north of Mozambique. He states that there is a quadruped to be found there, which he calls the Nzoodzoo, which is by no means rare in Makooa. It is about the size of a horse, extremely fleet and strong. A single horn projects from its forehead, from two feet to two feet six long. This is said to be flexible when the animal is asleep, and can be curled up at pleasure like an elephant's proboscis; but it becomes stiff and hard, under the excitement of rage. It is extremely fierce, invariably attacking a man whenever it discerns him. The device adopted by the natives to escape from its fury, is to climb a thick and tall tree out of sight. If the enraged animal ceases to see his enemy, he presently gallops away. But if he catches sight of the fugitive in the tree, he instantly commences an attack upon the tree with

his frontal horn, boring at the root of it until he brings it down, when the wretched man is presently gored to death. If the tree is not very bulky, the perseverance of the creature usually succeeds in overturning it. Its fury shews itself in goring and mangling its victim.

The following report from the Baron von Müller, was a few years ago communicated to the "Athenæum." "At Melper in Kordofan, in the year 1848, a man who was in the habit of selling me specimens of animals, one day asked me if I wished also for an 'anasa,' a creature which he thus described. It is of the size of a small donkey, has a thick body and thin bones, coarse hair, and a tail like a boar. It has a long horn on its forehead, and lets it hang when alone, but erects it immediately on seeing an enemy. It is a formidable weapon, but I do not know its exact length. I have often seen it in the wild grounds, where the negroes kill it, and make shields from its skin." (Athenæum, Jan. 1849.)

Sir John Barrow in his "Travels in Africa," saw in the interior of a cavern a sketch made by a Kaffir, resembling closely the Nzoodzoo of Mr. Freeman. There are also several horns, supposed to be those of unicorns, in different museums. There is one at St. Denis, in Paris, said to have been presented by M. Thevet, who obtained it from the King of Monomotapa, in whose country report says that unicorns abound. Naturalists, however, pronounce this horn to be simply the tusk of an elephant, carved and pared. There is another at Venice, and another at Strasburg. A monoceros horn forms a part of the Tradescant collection, but it is generally agreed that that is the tooth of a narwhal. Further there is in the British Museum, a horn, declared to have been brought from Africa, which is equally unlike the horns of the narwhal and the rhinoceros. It is about thirty inches long, almost equally thick throughout, smooth, hard, and rather sharp-pointed at the top. From its narrowness at the base and its great length and weight it appears likely that it would remain loose and moveable as described on the nasal bones, until excitement

renders the muscular action more rigid, and the portion of skin which sustains it more firm—circumstances which may seem to corroborate the repeated assertion of the natives that the horn is flexible. ("Cycl. Bib. Lit.")

On the whole, to close this long discussion,—though modern zoologists deny, and with reason, that the existence of a one-horned animal distinct from the rhinoceros has been established; yet the multitude of respectable and independent testimony which has been advanced in its favour, prevents them from declaring positively against it. It is much the same case as with the tailed men. Let a man with a tail or a unicorn proper be produced, and we will believe in them.

Another "strange beast" mentioned in Scripture is Behemoth (Job, xl. 15). "Behold now behemoth, which I have made with thee. He eateth grass as an ox." There has been very great dispute as to the animal here mentioned. Most writers understand either the elephant or the hippopotamus to be intended, though some are inclined to identify it with the rhinoceros. But the Jews have strange fables respecting it, which would represent it as a totally different creature from any of the three above mentioned. They say that there were never more than two of the species created, and in order to prevent its multiplication the female was soon afterwards destroyed, but the male still lives in some unexplored region, and will continue to live till the end of the world. They understand literally the words, "the mountains bring him forth food," and "he drinketh up a river," affirming that he eats up every day as much grass as grows on a thousand hills, and exhausts all the water contained in a river; but by divine order, all that he eats and drinks during the day is supplied anew during the night.

Others, though not disposed to adopt these fancies, nevertheless think that none of the three huge animals before mentioned are either large or strong enough to satisfy the description given in the Book of Job. They think that some animal now extinct, possibly the mastodon or mammoth, must be

intended. How large these monsters of the primeval world really were, or to how late a period some few of them may have survived, are matters still unsettled. Dr. Adam Clarke asserts that the skeleton of which he examined a part, could not have been less than twenty-five feet high and sixty long; but more recent authorities allow nothing like these proportions. The skeleton however of the *Mastodon giganteus* in the Museum at Philadelphia cannot be less than fifteen or sixteen feet in height.

On these points every reader must form his own opinions, but a careful examination of the passage in the Book of Job would certainly give most persons the notion that the hippopotamus is the creature intended. The words, "he lieth under the shady trees, in the covert of the reeds and the fens. The shady trees cover him with their shadow; the willows of the brook compass him about," exactly correspond with the creature's habits, lying as it is wont to do, on the banks of a river, and passing alternately from the water to the land. If the elephant had been intended, we should have surely heard some mention of its trunk. Again, the fact that it is spoken of in close connection with the leviathan, is a reason for supposing the hippopotamus to be meant.[1] The leviathan almost certainly denotes the crocodile; indeed the Septuagint does give "δράκοντα," (which must mean the crocodile) as the equivalent of the word. Now the hippopotamus and the crocodile are natives of the same country, and are constantly found in connection with one another. As for the size of the hippopotamus as being insufficient to answer to the description of the inspired writer, the force of that argument depends very much on the ideas which every reader forms for himself, as to the bulk of the creature described. It should be borne in mind in the first place, that the portraiture is a poetical

[1] The idea entertained by some that the leviathan is the same as the whale, is wholly untenable. The two resemble each other in nothing but their great size. The bright eyes, the impenetrable *scales*, the possibility of catching the creature with a hook, all suit the crocodile, but are irreconcilable with the whale.

one; and in the second, that any way the hippopotamus is an animal of prodigious dimensions. Sometimes a full-grown male is found, which is seventeen feet long, fifteen in circumference and seven high; and it is possible that in very early times still larger specimens existed.

Another monstrous beast which had, and it may be still has, a real existence, but which has caused naturalists a considerable amount of research and trouble, is the Urus or Auroch of ancient Germania and Scythia. Its proportions are described by Cæsar ("Bell. Gallic." VI.) as enormous. He says they are in size little less than the elephant; in shape, colour and appearance, like bulls. Their strength and swiftness of foot is great; and they show no mercy to any man or wild beast of which they catch sight. The inhabitants take them in pits and kill them. They cannot by possibility be tamed. Their horns differ considerably both in size and shape from the horns of common oxen. Ælian in the third century, and Cosmas in the sixth, notice these animals. The former describes them as black cattle with white tails. Eight hundred years after Cosmas, Marco Polo represents them as then existing in Erguial, a part, that is, of the kingdom of the great Khan of Tartary. "There are wild cattle in that country," he writes, "almost as big as elephants; splendid creatures covered everywhere, but on the back, with shaggy hair, a good four palms long. They are partly black, partly white, and really wonderfully fine creatures." In the Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, this quadruped is described as being "five times the size of the domestic yak." The horns are three feet long and of immense girth.

The creature is said to be still in existence in its wild untameable state, in parts of Lithuania and Poland. This however is regarded by naturalists as doubtful. But there is no question that a century or two ago, the auroch was to be found in the wilder parts of Northern Europe, gigantic and ferocious, as Cæsar describes it. Mr. Grattan in his novel of "Jacqueline of Holland," gives a very accurate and graphic picture of it.

"At the same instant," he writes, "the horses and dogs, every one of them started, and trembled in the instinct of brute alarm. The very deer, that lay on the ground, in the last gasp of death, made a struggling effort to rise, and expired with a shudder of fear. The next moment a roar of terrible depth resounded through the forest, and the monster which had sent it forth, appeared close to the group, crashing through branch and briar with an air of savage majesty at once appalling and sublime. His height and bulk were enormous, double that of an ordinary sized bull. He was jet-black, with the exception of a broad stripe of white running along his back, as was visible when he stooped his huge head to the earth, butting against it and tearing it up furiously with his short thick horns, while his eyes gleamed like fireballs under the tuft of hair curling, garland like, on his front, and he lashed his long tail, and shook his mane, that hung full six feet from his neck, and swept the ground."

The wild cattle which anciently inhabited the great Caledonian forests, and are described by Boëtius as being fierce as lions, and bearing so great a hatred to man, that they will not eat any of the herbs that have been so much as touched by him, are generally believed to have been a different and smaller breed than that of the aurochs of Germany. Some of the Scottish wild cattle are still preserved in Chillingham Park, Northumberland, where they retain their characteristic ferocity and hate of man.

Almost as prodigious in size was the Irish Elk, which though it has long been extinct, was in all likelihood coeval with the earlier generations of men. Perfect specimens still exist which prove how huge was its stature. One such, found at Ballaugh in the Isle of Man, was presented by the Duke of Athol to the Edinburgh Museum. Another, the largest, it is believed, in existence, was discovered in Wexford in 1849, at a depth of only four feet below the surface, buried in clay and mould. It measures twelve feet and a half to the tips of the horns, the spread of which is not less than eleven feet.

Elks, still in existence in various parts of the world, though not attaining the above proportions, are of great size and bulk, some specimens having been occasionally met with which are more than seven feet in height, independently of the horns.

The Mastodon (to which some reference has already been made), the Mammoth, the Mylodon, and others, were animals even vaster and more formidable. The skeletons of some of these are as much as seventeen and eighteen feet long, and are sometimes found in an almost perfect state, scarcely more than covered by a deposit of earth. A Mastodon was discovered at "Big-bone Lick," in Kentucky, the contents of whose stomach showed that it had browsed on the same plants which still grow in those regions. It is probable that they too were contemporaneous with primeval man; and that the traditions of the ravages they caused, and the terror they called forth, form the groundwork of many wild tales of monsters, still circulated and believed.

To conclude with a "strange beast," whose existence, though only recently ascertained, is certain enough, and which has at least as good a title to the name of "monster" as any in this chapter—the following is the description given by Du Chaillu of his first encounter—the first encounter, I believe, of any European—with the Gorilla.

"Suddenly," he writes, "as we were yet creeping on in silence, which made a heavy breath seem loud and distinct—the woods were all at once filled with the tremendous barking roar of the gorilla. Then the underbrush swayed rapidly just ahead, and presently before us stood an immense male gorilla. He had gone through the jungle on all fours; but when he saw our party, he erected himself and looked us boldly in the face. He stood about a dozen yards from us, and was a sight I shall never forget. Nearly six feet high, with immense body, huge chest, and great muscular arms, with fiercely glaring large deep grey eyes, and a hellish expression of face, which seemed to me like some nightmare vision—there stood before us the king of the African forest.

"He was not afraid of us. He stood there and beat his breast with his huge fists till it resounded like an immense bass drum, which is the animal's mode of offering defiance, meanwhile giving vent to roar after roar.

"The roar of the gorilla is the most singular and awful noise heard in the African forests. It begins with a sharp bark like an angry dog, then glides into a deep bass roll, which literally resembles the roll of distant thunder along the sky, for which I have been tempted to take it, when I did not see the animal. So deep is it, that it seems to proceed less from the mouth and throat, than from the deep chest and vast paunch.

"His eyes began to flash fiercer fire as we stood motionless on the defensive, and the crest of short hair which stands on his forehead began to twitch up and down, while his powerful fangs were again shown, as he again sent forth a thunderous roar. He advanced a few steps—then stopped to utter his hideous roar again—advanced again, and finally stopped, when at a distance of about six yards from us. And here, just as he was beginning another of his roars, beating his breast in a rage, we fired and killed him. With a groan, which had something terribly human in it, and yet which was full of brutishness, he fell forward on his face. The body shook convulsively for a few moments: then all was quiet, and I had leisure to examine the huge body. It proved to be five feet eight inches high, and the muscular development of the arm and chest showed what immense strength it had possessed."

This monster ape, as enormous when compared with the rest of the species, as the auroch among oxen, or the Irish elk among deer, is in truth as formidable an enemy as man has anywhere to encounter. Nevertheless much has been said respecting it which is either exaggeration or fable. Du Chaillu contradicts the stories of its attacking the elephant with clubs, large numbers of gorillas banding together for the purpose: the creature, in fact, not being gregarious. It

is also untrue, he says, that they build rude huts, or that they sit on the lower boughs of trees waiting for travellers who may pass under, and then drop down and strangle them with their hind legs. They build no huts, and do not make their resting-places in trees.

STRANGE BIRDS

Chapter XVIII

The Roc—Phœnix—Simorg—Dinornis—Condor—Halcyon—Dodo

THE reader will remember that, when the second voyage of Sindbad the Sailor was under consideration, the enormous dimensions of the "roc" were mentioned, but the discussion of the matter was postponed to the present chapter. It is needless to say, that the statements of Oriental writers respecting it are, for the most part, monstrous exaggerations, and occasionally simple inventions. The question we have to consider is, What substratum of truth do they contain? Most of the travellers in question not only rival Sindbad in the marvels he records, but far outdo him. Here is a specimen.

"A certain merchant," says Damar,[1] "came to the land of Megareb—one who had lived for a long time among the Isles of Sinæ. He had the radicem of a feather from the wing of this bird (the roc), which held nine bladders full of water. He said that, once on a time, when he was journeying to the Sea of Sinæ, the wind drove him to a great island, that they might take thence wood and water. They saw a great tent more than a hundred cubits high, which shone and glistened. When they had approached it, full of wonder, they found it to be the egg of a roc, which they ceased not to strike with sticks and stones, until it was split open by the chick, which was as big as a mountain. They clung to the feathers, trying to draw it towards them; but the

[1] Quoted by Lane in his edit. of the "Arabian Nights."

chick shook its wings clear of them, so as they could carry nothing off, except a feather, which was torn out by the root from the wings, before it was fully formed. Then they killed the chick, and took as much of its flesh as they could. They cooked it in the island, and the log with which they stirred it in the pot turned black."

Then follows the incident, almost identical with that related by Sindbad in his fourth voyage. "On the following morning the rocs were seen flying, like great clouds, through the air, carrying great masses of rock in their claws. These they let fall, when they got near the ship. One of these would have shattered the vessel to fragments, but that it just missed striking it." "In the Indian Sea," says Kazweenee, "is a bird so vast, that, when it is dead, men take the half of its bill and make a ship of it!"

Marco Polo reports the existence of a feather very nearly corresponding in size to the above. "The great Khan," he writes, "sent to those parts to inquire about these curious matters, and the story was told by those who went thither. They brought to the great Khan a feather of the said 'roc,' which *is said*" (Marco does not say that he has seen it) "to measure ninety spans, while the quill part is two palms in circumference"—a marvellous object!

Marco also bears witness to the existence of the bird itself, though here also it should be noted that, in all he says respecting it, he speaks from the information of others, and not from his own knowledge. "It is said," he writes, "that in those other islands to the south, which the ships are unable to visit, because a strong current prevents their return, is found the bird 'gryphon,' which appears there at certain seasons." Persons who had been there, and had seen it, told Messer Marco Polo, that "it was for all the world like an eagle, though one indeed of enormous size—so big, in fact, that its wings covered an extent of thirty paces, and its quills were twelve paces long, and thick in proportion. And it was so strong, that it could seize an elephant in its talons, and

carry him high into the air and drop him, so that he is smashed to pieces. Having so killed him, the gryphon swoops down on him and eats him at leisure. The people of those isles call the bird 'ruc,' and it has no other name. I wot not if this be the real gryphon, or if there be another manner of bird as great. But this I can tell you for certain, that they are not half lions, half birds, as our stories relate."

A story of the fifteenth century (quoted by Colonel Yule) states that, "about the year of our Lord, 1420, a ship, or junk, of India, in crossing the Indian Sea, was driven, by

way of the 'isles of men and women,' beyond the Cape of Diab, and carried in a westerly and southwesterly direction for forty days, without seeing anything but sky and sea; during which time they made, to the best of their judgment, 2000 miles. The gale then ceasing, they turned back, and were seventy days in getting to the aforesaid Cape Diab. The ship having touched on the coast to supply its wants, the mariners beheld there the egg of a certain bird, called Chrocko, which egg was as big as a butt. And the bigness of the bird is such, that between the extremities of the wings it is said to be sixty paces. They say, too, it carries away an elephant, or any other great animal, with the greatest ease,

and does great injury to the inhabitants of the country, and is most rapid in its flight."

Thevenot reports, from the information of Father Bolivar, a Jesuit, that a species of condor of enormous size was seen by many of the Portuguese, in their expedition against the kingdom of Sofala. "In some countries," he adds, "I myself have seen the wing feathers of that enormous fowl, although the bird itself I never beheld. The feather itself, as could be deduced from its form, was one of the middle ones; it was twenty-eight palms in length, and three in breadth. The quill part, from the root to the extremity, was five palms in length, and of the thickness of an average man's palm, and of extreme strength and hardness. Those who had seen the bird stated that it was bigger than the bulk of a couple of elephants and that, hitherto, nobody had succeeded in killing one. It rises to the clouds with such extraordinary swiftness, that it seems scarcely to stir its wings. In form it is like an eagle. But though its size and swiftness are so extraordinary, it has much trouble in procuring food, on account of the density of the forests with which all that region is clothed. Its own dwelling is in cold and desolate tracts, such as the Mountains of the Moon, and in the valleys of that range it shows itself at certain periods. Its black feathers are held in very high estimation, and it is with the greatest difficulty that one can be got from the natives; for one such serves to fan ten people, and to keep off the terrible heat from them as well as the wasps and flies." (Ludolph's "Ethiop. History," quoted by Yule.)

The reader will remember also, in connection with this, the enormous nest found by Captain Cook in an island, near New South Wales, as mentioned in chapters 2, 11.

Another bird as famous, and also as fabulous, as the roc, is the Phœnix. It has been supposed, by some commentators, that there is a reference to this bird in two passages of Scripture. In the Book of Job (xxix. 18), our version reads, "Then I said, I shall die in my nest, and multiply my days

like the sand." Some translators, as Bede, render this, "multiply my days like the phœnix." Again, Pslam xcii. 12, "The righteous shall flourish like the palm-tree." Some propose to translate the passage—and among these is Tertullian, the Christian Father:—"The righteous shall flourish like the phœnix." But this is, at best, extremely fanciful; and all the best authorities are agreed that the renderings as given in our English Bible are correct. Omitting these, the first detailed mention of the bird is that given by Herodotus (II. 73): "There is also," he says, "another sacred bird, the name of which is the phœnix. It seldom visits even the Egyptians themselves, only once in five hundred years, according to the account of the people of Heliopolis. They say he never comes, except when his sire dies. If he resembles the picture drawn of him, he is of the following size and shape. His plumage is partly gold-coloured, partly crimson, and he is exactly like the eagle in outline and bulk. They say that the bird acts after the following manner, though I cannot believe what they say. Departing out of Arabia, he brings his parent to the Temple of the Sun, having just enveloped him in myrrh; and in the Temple of the Sun he buries him. He conveys him in the following manner. In the first place, he shapes an egg of myrrh of such a volume as he is able to carry, and then tries whether he can carry it. After he has completed the trial he hollows out the egg and places his parents inside it. Then he closes with other myrrh that part of the egg in which he has placed the body of his parent. When the body lies inside, the weight is the same; and having thus enveloped him, he carries him into Egypt to the Temple of the Sun."

The same story is repeated, with some slight variety of circumstance, by a host of writers, until the time of Tacitus, who says that the number of years which elapsed between the visits of the birds is a matter respecting which authorities differ. The general opinion is that it is five hundred. Others make it fourteen hundred and sixty years. Some say that it appeared first in the time of Sesostris, after that, in the reigns,

successively, of Amasis, Ptolemy Euergetes, and lastly, Tiberius. But he justly remarks these intervals would be wholly irregular and unequal. According to a version of the story most prevalent in modern times, when the phœnix arrives at extreme old age, it burns itself on a funeral pile of its own building. From its ashes the old bird rises again, renewed to the vigour of youth, and carries off the remains of the old body, and buries it in the manner described by Herodotus. According to others, a small worm makes its appearance among the ashes of the burnt body, and grows into a new phœnix. Marvellous as the story is, the ancients seem really to have believed it. Even the sober Tacitus, while he admits that the story is full of uncertainty, and has received fabulous additions, yet adds there can be no question that the bird is sometimes seen in Egypt.

It is even more strange that the early Fathers of the Church, and a succession of writers long after them, should have attached credit to it. Clement declares that the bird was created as an emblem of the Resurrection. "Knowing men's unbelief," says St. Cyril, "God provided a bird called the phœnix." Tertullian and Epiphanius, and many others, write to the same effect. It is not to be wondered at that, during the Dark and Middle Ages no writer should have been found to dispute its existence. It was credited apparently in the sixteenth century; for Camden tells us that Pope Clement VIII. sent a phœnix's feather as a present to Lord Tyrone; and even in the middle of the seventeenth century, Sir Thomas Browne thought it necessary to state, at considerable length, his reasons for disbelieving the existence of the bird. For this scepticism he was sharply censured by contemporary writers. If the editor of the "Penny Cyclopædia" is to be trusted, there are persons to be found who believe in it even now!

Another bird famous in Eastern romance, though less generally known to English readers is the Simorg, which Southey has introduced into his poem of "Thalaba." He calls it the "Bird of Ages," and represents it as resting—

"On a green and mossy bank
  Beside a rivulet,
No sound intruded on his solitude,
  Only the river was heard;
Whose everlasting flow
From the birthday of the world had made
  The same unvaried murmuring.
Here dwelt the all-knowing Bird
  In deep tranquillity;
His eyelids ever closed
In full enjoyment of profound repose."

Here he gives answers to those who approach and question him. Southey supplies a further account of this bird in the notes to his poem. Simorg Angkka, he writes, quoting from the notes of a friend, is a bird, or Griffon, of extraordinary strength and size (as its name imports, which signifies "as large as thirty eagles")—which was sent, according to Eastern writers, to subdue and chastise the rebellious Dives. It was supposed to possess rational faculties and the gift of speech. The Caherman Nameh relates that Simorg Angkka being asked his age, replied: "This world is very ancient, for it has already been replenished seven times with beings different from man, and as often depopulated. The age of Adam, in which we now are, is to endure seven thousand years, making a great cycle:" he himself had seen twelve of these revolutions, and knew not how many more he had to see. Colonel Yule says that in all likelihood the Garuda of the Hindoos, the Simorg of the Persians, the Angkka of the Arabs, and the Gryphon of the Greeks, as well as that bird of widespread legend, the roc—are all so many versions of one original fable.

Quitting the regions of romance, we find that certain birds of a colossal size, though not approaching the alleged dimensions of the roc and simorg, existed not many generations ago, in the islands bordering on Australia and New Zealand. The Rev. W. Williams in the year 1842 makes the following statement. "It is about three years ago, when I was paying a visit to this coast, south of the East Cape, that the natives

told me of some extraordinary monster, which they said was in existence in an inaccessible cavern on the side of the river Wairoa, and they shewed me at the same time some fragments taken out of the beds of rivers which they said belonged to this creature, to which they gave the name of Moa. When I came to reside in this neighbourhood (Poverty Bay, New Zealand) I heard the same story a little enlarged; for it was said that the same creature was still existing at the same hill, of which the name was Wakapunaki, and that it is guarded by a reptile of the lizard species, but I could not learn that any of the present generation had seen it. I considered the whole to be an idle fable, but offered a large reward to any one who would catch for me, either the bird or its protector."

Mr. Williams did not obtain either the one or the other; but a considerable number of bones were brought to him, which he sent to Dr. Buckland, the eminent geologist. From these and some others, English professors have proved the existence of a gigantic bird, to which the name Dinornis has been given, the largest specimens of which Professor Owen affirms to have been ten feet high. Mr. Williams considers that these birds were in existence at no very distant period, and that some of them reached the height of not less than sixteen feet. He does not think that they have been seen alive by any persons now living, though he does not feel sure of that. He says that happening to speak to an American about the bones which had been sent to England, the latter told him that the living bird was still to be found in the neighbourhood of Cloudy Bay in Cook's Straits. He said that the natives there had mentioned to an Englishman belonging to a whaling party, that there was a bird of extraordinary size to be seen, only at night, on the side of a hill near the place, and that he went with a native and a second Englishman to the spot. After waiting some time they saw at a little distance from them, the creature which they described as being fourteen or sixteen feet high. One of the men proposed to go near and shoot it, but his companion (or perhaps both of them) was so exceedingly terrified, that they were satisfied with looking

at the bird, when after a while it took alarm and strode off up the side of the mountain.

It would appear that these monster birds are not extinct even now. Dr. Hector, the Government geologist in New Zealand, quite recently found their tracks in the middle island, and measured the prints of the claws; which he found to be fifteen inches long, while the length of the stride was nearly six feet. Some of the gold-diggers also report having seen these birds in the dusk of the evening, or by the light of their camp fires. Being night-birds and of solitary habits, it is very difficult to obtain a satisfactory view of them.

Another monster bird, which is not only no creature of fable, but is in undoubted existence at the present day, is the great Condor of the Andes. About this creature "Travellers' Tales" have been told, which if they do not rival the fables circulated respecting the roc and the phœnix, at all events very far exceed the bounds of reasonable belief. Ray, in his synopsis, affirms that such is the enormous and almost incredible magnitude attributed to it, that he at one time considered the condor the mere offspring of fiction, and dared not insert the bird in Willoughby's "Ornithology." Acosta says that the birds called condors are of great magnitude and of such strength that they are not only able to eviscerate and devour a sheep, but even an entire calf. Garcilasso assures us that two of them will dare to attack a cow or a bull, and will devour it; nature having endowed them with a beak sufficiently strong to perforate and tear off a bull's hide, and rip out its entrails. "Neither," he adds, "do they abstain from the human race. They will set on and slay, single-handed, boys of ten and twelve years." Garcilasso reckons the span of the wings at sixteen feet. Desmarchais increases this to eighteen, and declares that their enormous size renders it impossible for the bird to enter a forest but that it will attack a man or carry off a stag. Linnæus also gives sixteen feet as the measure of the expanded wings. He adds that the rushing of these, as the condor nears the earth, is appalling and deaf-

ening. Referring to the alleged attacks of the condor on boys, another writer affirms that the Indians make up figures, resembling boys, of a very viscous clay, so that when the birds swoop down on them, their feet become entangled in the clay, and being unable to withdraw them, they are made captive. Humboldt measured several specimens which had been shot, and found that none of them exceeded nine feet from the tip of one wing to that of the other, and he was assured by experienced hunters that in no case was eleven feet exceeded. But others report differently. Temple in his "Travels in Peru," published about fifty years ago (1830), says that he shot a condor the spread of whose wings was forty feet, the feathers being twenty feet in length and the quill eight inches in circumference. These measurements do not fall far short of the roc itself!

The Halcyon of the ancients, identified by modern naturalists with the kingfisher, has been the subject of many fables which may vie with those told of the condor. The old myth says that Alcyone was the wife of Ceyx, and the two were remarkable for the strength of their conjugal affection. Ceyx perished in a shipwreck, and Alcyone threw herself into the sea in despair at his loss. The gods in compassion changed them into birds, and in further approval of their mutual attachment, granted them some strange privileges. The mother bird laid her eggs in a floating nest composed of fishbones, and during the fourteen days of her incubation, which were the seven immediately before and after the shortest day of the year, the sea remained perfectly calm, in order that no injury might be done to the eggs; whence has originated the expression "Halcyon days," or days of unbroken peace and quiet. What can have been the foundation of this strange fancy it is difficult to say. In the East there is a somewhat similar fable of a bird that is continually on the wing, never once alighting on the earth; and in order that the species may be continued, it is said to lay and hatch its eggs on the back of the male bird! The imaginary nest of a kingfisher—im-

aginary, for it does not, in reality, make any nest at all, but lays its eggs in a hole scooped out on the banks of a stream—the imaginary nest was anciently supposed to be endowed with certain medical properties, and preserve woollen articles from the moth. The stuffed bird, if suspended by a string from the ceiling, was believed to turn always to the wind quarter. So in Shakespeare's "King Lear," Kent when denouncing slaves such as the stewards, affirms that they—

> "Turn their *halcyon* beaks
> With every gale, and vary of their masters."

Lastly, there is the Dodo, which may well be described as a strange bird, if what we are told of its habits and peculiarities is to be trusted. It should be premised, that it has certainly been extinct for nearly a century, and that some naturalists have disputed the fact that it ever existed. Of this, however, there can be no reasonable doubt. Vasco da Gama after doubling the Cape of Good Hope, discovered in an island some sixty leagues beyond it, a bird which he calls "the Solitary," the description of which, as given by him and other navigators near about his time, accords very well with that of the Dodo. Clusius in his "Exotica," published 1605, gives a sketch of the bird taken from one drawn by a Dutch captain, and adds the following account of it. "This exotic bird found by the Hollanders in the island called Cerne (the Mauritius) did equal, or exceed, a swan in bigness, but was of a far different shape: for its head was great, covered as it were with a certain membrane resembling a hood. Its bill was not flat and broad, but thick and long, of a yellowish colour near the head, the point being black. It is covered with thin and short feathers, and wants wings, instead whereof it hath only four or five long black feathers. The hinder part of the body is very flat and fleshy, wherein for the tail were four or five small curled feathers, twisted up together, of an ash colour. The flesh when boiled continued to be so tough as to be unfit for food."

Another traveller reports that "stones, and especially one brown stone, is found in the stomach and gizzards of the dodos, which would seem to argue that they are of the ostrich kind. When these birds build their nests, they choose a clean place, gather together some palm leaves for the purpose, and heap them up a foot and a half high from the ground, on which they sit. They never lay but one egg, which is much larger than that of a goose. The male and female sit on it by turns. All the while they are sitting on it, they will not suffer any other bird of their species to come within two hundred yards of the place; but—what is very singular—the male will never drive away any strange females. When he perceives one, he makes a noise with his wings to call the female, and she drives the unwelcome stranger away, not desisting until it is without the prescribed bounds. The female does the same as regards any intruding males, summoning her mate, and leaving to him to expel the trespassers. Some days after the young one leaves the nest, a company of thirty or forty bring another young one to it; and the new-fledged bird, with its father and mother, joining with the band, marches to some bye place. We frequently followed them, and found that afterwards the old couple went each their own way alone, or in couples, and left the two young ones together, which we called 'a marriage!' This particularity," adds Lequat, "has something in it, which looks a little fabulous. Nevertheless what I say is sincere truth."

A specimen of this strange bird was apparently brought to England and exhibited in London in 1638. L'Estrange, in his observations on Sir Thomas Browne's "Vulgar Errors," writes as follows:—

"About 1638 as I walked London streets, I saw the picture of a strange fowl, hung out upon a cloth. Myselfe and one or two more gentlemen in company went in to see it. It was kept in a chamber, and was a great fowl, somewhat bigger than the largest Turkey cock, and so legged and footed, but stouter and thicker and of a more erect shape, coloured before

like the breast of a young cock. The keeper called it a Dodo, and in the end of a chimney in the chamber there lay a heap of large pebble stones, whereof he gave it many in our sight, some as big as nutmegs, and the keeper told us she ate them conducing to digestion, and though I remember not how far the keeper was questioned, yet am I confident that she cast them all again." (Sloane MSS., No. 1839.)

Whether this bird was stuffed and placed in Tradescant's museum, or whether the specimen there was procured directly by him from the Mauritius, there are no means of determining. But it is certain that a stuffed Dodo was among the items of that collection. It is numbered in Tradescant's catalogue, 1656. It is there described as "Dodur from the island of Mauritius. It is not able to fly being so big." The collection in question passed subsequently into the possession of Elias Ashmole, who presented it to the University of Oxford, and it became the nucleus of the Ashmolean Museum. There is no doubt that the stuffed Dodo went to Oxford with the other articles, for Hyde (in his "Hist. of the Religion of the Ancient Persians"), makes mention of the bird, as existing at the date when he wrote (A.D. 1700) in the Museum at Oxford. But either it had not been properly stuffed or it had not been taken sufficient care of, for in 1755 an order was given to remove, and doubtless to destroy it, together with forty other specimens, they being decayed. Those were times when little attention was paid by the University to such matters; and doubtless the rare value of the specimen in question was not understood. But "with it perished," as a writer of the present day remarks, "not simply one example of a rare bird, but an entire species."

All that remains of the dodo now are:—(*a*) a painting in the British Museum which has often been engraved, representing the bird sitting on the rocky bank of a stream (it was painted, we are told, in Holland from a living bird brought from St. Maurice's island "in the early times of the discovery of the Indies"); (*b*) some rough sketches made by early navi-

gators, Clusius (1625), Herbert (1634), Francis Lequat (published 1690), and Dronte from Bontius (1658), the latter almost identical with the oil painting before referred to; (*c*) a leg in the British Museum, and a leg and a head in the Ashmolean at Oxford.

STRANGE FISHES

Chapter XIX

The Mermaid—Kraken—Cuttle-Fish—Gymnotus

We proceed now to deal with the wonders of the Ocean, and we have no cause to be surprised if we here meet with many wild and incredible tales. Travellers are apt to be misled when their journeyings lie amid strange and distant lands, and themselves surrounded by men whose language they can but imperfectly comprehend. They have, however, the opportunity, if they choose to employ it, of examining closely and at their leisure the phenomena which appear strange to them, and by patience and perseverance may generally sift them to the utmost. It is otherwise in the wild ever-changing deep. What is there seen is often seen only for a single moment. Before they have the opportunity of a second observation, the winds or the waves may have carried them away from the spot, and they may seek in vain to regain it. Again there are no inhabitants there, from whom they can seek information on any point of difficulty. It is no marvel, therefore, that the strange monsters which the sea is said to produce, should still continue matters of dispute, even down to the present day.

Chief among these may be reckoned the Merman and Mermaid. The belief in the existence of these, under the names of Tritons and Nereids, is very ancient. Pliny tells us that during the reign of Tiberius, there came to him an ambassador from Olisipo, on the Tagus, to inform him that upon the sea-coast, there had been discovered in a cavity in the rock, a certain sea-goblin, called a Triton, sounding a shell like a

trumpet, and that he was in form and shape like the creatures commonly depicted as Tritons (Pliny, IX. 5).

Ælian states that in the island of Taprobane (Ceylon) or rather in the adjoining seas, sea-strayers and sea-women are to be found, the women having thorns instead of hair ("De Nat. Anim." XVI. 18).

Alexander ab Alexandro states that while his friend Gaza was travelling in the Morea, a live mermaid was cast on the shore. She had an expression not unlike the human, with a face fair and well proportioned, and a body rough with scales up to the middle, ending in a fish's tail. A great crowd gathered round her, and their presence so distressed her that she burst into tears. Gaza, who was a considerate man, remonstrated with the spectators, and requested them to stand on one side. Which they had no sooner done, than the mermaid scrambled back to the sea, as well as she could on her fins and tail, and, plunging in head first, disappeared in a moment.

Pontoppidan reports that a merman was caught by the fishermen at Hordeland, near Bergen. He was carried to King Hiorlief, to whom he is said "to have sung a song, though not a melodious one."

Bussæus relates that two senators on their return home from Norway caught a merman, but they speedily threw him back into the sea; for as he lay upon the deck, he spoke Danish to them, and threatened them that if they did not give him his liberty, the ship should be cast away and every soul should perish.

Pontoppidan is disposed to disbelieve these stories, but nevertheless to credit the existence of the merman. He argues that as there are, beyond question, such creatures as sea-cows, sea-horses, sea-hogs, sea-dogs, etc., it is improbable that there should not be also sea-men. Nay, he seems to think it would be something of an affront to the human race, if they alone had not their counterpart among the fishes!

Another Norwegian writer says that "in the Sea of Angola, mermaids are frequently catched, which resemble the human species. They are taken in nets, and are killed by the negroes,

and are heard to shriek and cry like women. The inhabitants on that coast eat their flesh."

Jablonsky, in his Universal Dictionary, writes: "Merman, that is a sea-man, a fish found in the seas and in some rivers in the southern parts of Africa and India, in the Philippine Islands, Moluccas, Brazil, North America, and Europe in the North Sea. The length is eight spans; the head oval, and the face resembling that of a man. It has a high forehead, little eyes, a flat nose and a large mouth, but no ears or chin. It has two arms which are short, without joints or elbows, but with hands or paws, to each of which there are four long fingers connected with each other by a membrane, like the foot of a goose. The females have breasts, at which they suckle their young; so that the upper part of their body resembles that of a human species, and the lower part that of a fish. They make a lamentable cry when drawn out of the water."

Mr. Luke Debes tells us that there was seen in the year 1670, at Faröe, by many of the inhabitants, as also by others, from different parts of Suderoe, a mermaid close into shore. She stood there for two hours and a half, and was up to the middle in water. She had long hairs on her head, which hung down to the surface of the water all round about her. She held a fish with the head downwards in her right hand. In the year 1723, four Danes underwent a legal examination, respecting a merman, which they affirmed they had seen. They were some distance from land, they said, when they saw something floating about a mile off, like a dead body, which made them row to it to examine it. When they came within seven or eight fathoms, it still appeared as at first, for it had not stirred. But at that instant it sank, and came up almost immediately in the same spot. Upon this, out of fear, they lay still and let the boat float, that they might the better examine the monster; which by the help of the current came nearer and nearer to them. He turned his face, and stared at the men, which gave them a good opportunity of examining him. He stood in the same place for seven or eight minutes,

and was seen above the water down to his breast. At last they grew alarmed, and began to move off. Upon which the monster blew up with his cheeks, and made a kind of roaring noise, and then dived under the water, so as they did not see him any more. In regard to his form and shape, they say he appeared to them like an old man, strong-limbed and with broad shoulders, but his arms they could not see. His head was smaller in proportion to his body, and had short curled black hair, which did not reach below the ears. His eyes lay deep in his head, and he had a meagre and pinched face with a black beard, that looked as if it had been cut. His skin was coarse and very full of hair.

A French newspaper, in the year 1762, records that in the preceding June, in the island of Noirmoutier, off the coast of La Vendée, two girls who were searching for shells in the crevices of the rocks, discovered in a kind of natural grotto, an animal of a human form, leaning on its hands. One of the girls having a long knife, stuck it into the animal, which on being wounded, groaned like a human person. The two girls cut off its hands, which had fingers and nails quite formed, with webs between the fingers. The surgeon of the island, who went to see it, says it was as big as a full-grown man, and that its skin was white resembling that of a drowned person, that it had the breasts of a full-chested woman, a flat nose, a large mouth, the chin adorned with a kind of beard, formed of fine shells, and over the whole body tufts of similar shells. It had the tail of a fish, and at the extremity of it, a kind of feet.

In 1775, a mermaid was exhibited in London, said to have been taken in the previous year, in the Gulf of Sanchis. It was about three feet in length, and resembled in the face a handsome young woman. The head was without hair, but ornamented by a pyramidal fin. Amongst its other marvels it was said to possess an enchanting voice, which it never exerted except before a storm. Edmund Burke was among those who went to see it, and believed in it. Nevertheless it was afterwards proved that it had been manufactured, chiefly out

of the skin of the angel-shark; and the exhibitor, after making a considerable sum of money, was punished as a rogue and vagabond. A clever American exhibited a similar curiosity in London, not many years ago, which was made up of a monkey's skin, sewed on to that of a seal.

In some of the above-mentioned cases, there has probably been very little wilful deception. Sometimes the common seal, sometimes the dugong or the manatee have been mistaken for the fabulous creature of ancient legend—a vivid imagination,

and the exaggerated additions always attaching to any stories handed about from lip to lip, having completed the picture.

Hans Egede, the Danish missionary to Greenland, after describing the merman and mermaid, goes on to depict a third, which he calls hafgusa, the same as the kraken of Norway. "This," he writes, is so terrible and frightful that he does not know how to describe it. "Its shape, length and bulk seem to exceed all size and measure. When this monster is hungry, it is said to vomit through its mouth some sweet-scented matter, which perfumes the whole sea, and by this means it allures and draws all sorts of fishes and animals, even the whales, to it. These in whole droves flock thither and run into the wide open swallow of this hideous monster, as into a whirlpool,

until its maw is well-freighted with a copious load of all sorts of fishes and animals, and then it shuts its swallow, and has enough to digest and to live upon for the whole year."

Egede appears to have no belief in this creature. Not so Pontoppidan, who wrote a few years afterwards. "I now come," he writes, "to incontestably the largest sea-monster in the world. It is called kraken, kraxken, or as some name it krabben. The last name seems best to agree with the description of this creature, which is round, flat, and full of arms or branches. Our fishermen unanimously affirm and without the least variation in their acounts, that when they row out several miles to sea, particularly in hot summer days, and by their situation expect to find eighty or one hundred fathoms of water, it often happens that they do not find above twenty or thirty, and sometimes less. At these places they generally find the greatest plenty of fish, especially cod and ling. Their lines are no sooner out, than they may draw them up with the hooks all full of fish. By this they judge that the kraken is at the bottom. They say this creature causes those unnatural shallows mentioned above, and prevents their sounding. These the fishermen are always glad to find, looking upon them as the means of their taking abundance of fish. The only thing they have to observe is, whether the depth continues the same, or whether it grows shallower, by their seeming to have less water. If this last be the case, they find that the kraken is raising himself nearer the surface, and then it is time for them to stay no longer. They immediately leave off fishing, take to their oars, and get away as fast as they can. When they have reached the usual depth and find themselves out of danger, they lie upon their oars, and in a few minutes afterwards they see the enormous monster come up to the surface of the water. He then shows himself sufficiently, though his whole body does not appear, which in all likelihood no human eye ever beheld. Its back or upper part, which seems to be about an English mile and a half in circumference —some say more, but I choose (says Pontoppidan modestly)

the least measurement, for the greater certainty—its back looks at first like a number of small islands, surrounded with something that floats and fluctuates like sea-weed. Here and there a larger rising is observed, like sand-banks, on which various kinds of small fishes are seen continually leaping about, till they roll off into the water from the sides of it. At last several bright points or horns appear, which grow thicker and thicker, the higher they rise above the surface of the water, and sometimes they stand up as high and as large as the masts of middle-sized vessels.

"It seems that these are the creature's arms, and it is said if they were to lay hold of the largest man-of-war, they would pull it down to the bottom. After the monster has been on the surface of the water a short time, it begins slowly to sink again, and then the danger is as great as before, because the motion of it while sinking causes such a swell in the sea, and such an eddy or whirlpool, that it draws everything down with it.

"As we can hardly expect to examine this enormous sea-animal alive, I am the more concerned that nobody embraced the opportunity, which, according to the following account, once did offer itself, of seeing it entire when it was dead.

"In the year 1680, a krake (perhaps a young and careless one,) came into the water that runs between the rocks and cliffs in the parish of Alstahong, though the general custom of the creature is to keep always several leagues from land. It happened that its extended long arms or antennæ (which this creature seems to use like a snail), in turning about, caught hold of some trees standing near the water, which might easily have been torn up by the roots, but besides this, it was afterwards found, it had entangled itself in some openings or clefts in the rocks, and therein stuck so fast, and hung so unfortunately, that it could not work itself out, but perished and putrefied on the spot. The carcase, which was a long while decaying, and filled a great part of the narrow channel, made it almost impassable by its intolerable stench.

"The kraken have never been known to do any great harm,

though they may have taken the lives of persons, who could not, in consequence, record the mishap. I have never heard but one instance mentioned, and that was of a disaster which happened a few years ago at Frederickstadt in the diocese of Aggerhaus. They say that two fishermen accidentally, and to their great surprise, fell into such a spot upon the water, as has been before described, full of a thick slime almost like a morass. They immediately strove to get out of the place, but they had not time to turn quickly enough to save themselves from one of the kraken's horns, which so crushed the head of the boat, that it was with great difficulty they saved their lives on the wreck, though the weather was as calm as possible: for these monsters, like the sea-snake, never appear at any other time."

Naturalists have conjectured that the creature here described was some enormous species of sea-polypus. But no amount of exaggeration could surely have raised one of these to the level of Pontoppidan's narrative. One would rather conjecture that some submarine whirlpool must have driven large masses of gigantic seaweed on certain occasions to the surface, and that the stalks of these raised above the surface gave the terrified sailors the notion of the kraken's horns. It would be difficult to believe that a writer of Pontoppidan's respectability would wholly have invented so monstrous a fable as the above narrative appears to contain.

Another monster of the deep, which, if it cannot compare with the kraken in size, far exceeds it in the terrors it awakens, and the injuries it inflicts, is the Cuttle-fish. Dens, the Northern navigator, relates that he lost two of his men in the African seas by an attack of a fish of this kind. They were employed, during a calm, in scraping the sides of the vessel, when on a sudden a huge sea-monster made its appearance, and, seizing them in its vast arms, drew them under the water in spite of every effort to deliver them. A third sailor was also attacked, and, though rescued, died of the injuries he had received, on the following night, having been previously seized with delirium. Dens represents the creature's suckers

as being as large as ladles, and the arms the size of the fore-yards of his ship.

An Icelander reports that in 1639 there was thrown on the coast of Thingoe a singular monster, the body of which was as long as that of the human species. It was provided with seven tails, each of which was four feet long, and covered with knots resembling the pupil of the eye, with eyelids of a golden colour. Independently of the seven tails, another appeared above them, which extended to the length of four or five fathoms. This monster had neither bones, nor cartilages, and to the sight and touch appeared only like the front part of a woman's stays. No head was distinguishable, unless one or two projections, which were near the seven tails, might be called so. No doubt this was a huge cuttle-fish, the so-called "tails" being the eight antennæ, one of which had probably been torn off.

These animals are sometimes found of enormous size, especially in the tropics. M. Flourens, a few years ago, reported to the French Academy that one had been seen by an English officer, a little to the north of the Canary Isles, which was "from thirty-one to forty-six feet in length, having a soft gelatinous body, of a reddish colour, and shaped like an immense horn: the widest part being about two yards in diameter, and surrounded by very strong arms or tentacles."

An adventure with one of these, which took place among some islands in the Northern Pacific, is quoted by Mr. Wood, being (as he says) "too remarkable to be omitted. Mr. Beale was searching for shells upon the rocks, when he was greatly astonished to see at his feet a most extraordinary-looking animal, crawling towards the surf which it had only just left. It was creeping on its eight legs, which being of a soft flexible nature, bent considerably under the weight of its body, so that it only rose a small distance from the rocks. Mr. Beale endeavoured to stop it by pressing on one of its legs with his foot. But although he used considerable force for the purpose its strength was so great, that it several times liberated its member, in spite of all the efforts he could employ on the

wet and slippery rocks. He then laid hold of one of the arms with his hand, so that the limb appeared as if by these united efforts it would be torn asunder. Mr. Beale then gave it a powerful jerk, wishing to disengage it from the rocks to which it clung so forcibly. This effort the creature effectually resisted. It lifted its head with its large projecting eyes, and loosing its hold on the rocks, suddenly sprang on Mr. Beale's arm (which he had previously bared to the shoulder, for the purpose of thrusting it into the holes of rocks after shells), and clung to it with great power, endeavouring to get its beak, which Mr. Beale could now see between the roots of its arms, in a position to bite. Mr. Beale declares that a sensation of horror crept over his whole frame, when he found that this monstrous animal had fixed itself so firmly on his arm. Its cold slimy grasp became extremely sickening, and he loudly called the captain of the vessel, who was also searching for shells at some distance, to come and release him from his disgusting assailant. The captain quickly came, and, taking Mr. Beale down to the boat—during which time the latter was employed in keeping the beak of the creature away from his hand—he quickly released him, but only by destroying his tormentor with the boat knife, disengaging its body by portions. This creature must have measured across its expanded arms about four feet, whilst its body did not exceed in size a large clenched hand." (Cassell's "Pop. Hist." IV. p. 292.)

Victor Hugo's narrative of the combat between a man and one of these monsters in the "Toilers of the Sea," is one of his most successful literary efforts. There is, doubtless, a considerable element of exaggeration, and the whole narrative belongs to the style of writing called sensational: but the description of the creature is enough to make one's flesh creep.

"This frightful apparition," he writes, "is a greyish form, which undulates in the water. It is of the thickness of a man's arm, and in length nearly five feet. The outline is ragged. Its form resembles an umbrella closed, and without handle. This irregular mass advances slowly to you. Suddenly it opens, and eight radii issue abruptly from around a face with

two eyes. These radii are alive. Their undulations are like lambent flames. They resemble, when opened, the spokes of a wheel, of four or five feet in diameter, a terrible expansion. It springs upon its prey. The devil fish winds round the sufferer, covering and entangling him in its long folds. Underneath it is yellow, above a dull earthy hue. It adheres closely to its prey, and cannot be torn away—a fact which is due to its power of exhausting air. The eight antennæ, large at the roots, diminish gradually, and end in needle-like points. Underneath each of these feelers range two rows of pustules, decreasing in size, the largest near the head, the smaller at the extremities. Each row contains twenty-five of these. The creature therefore possesses four hundred of these, which are capable of being used as cupping glasses. They are capable of piercing to the depth of more than an inch. No grasp is like the sudden strain of the cephaloptera. It is with the sucking apparatus that it attacks. The victim is oppressed by a vacuum drawing at innumerable points. It is not a clawing or a biting, but an indescribable scarification. The talons of the wild beast enter into your flesh, but with the cephaloptera it is you who enter into the creature. The muscles swell, the fibres of the body are contracted, the skin cracks under the loathsome oppression, the blood spirts out and mingles horribly with the lymph of the monster, which clings to the victim by innumerable hideous mouths. He draws you to him, and into himself: while bowed down, glued to the ground, powerless, you feel yourself gradually emptied into this horrible pouch, which is the monster itself." (Hugo, "Toilers of the Sea.")

Another "strange fish," which well deserves the name is the Gymnotus, sometimes called the electrical eel, from the resemblance it bears to the last-named creature. The gymnotus is not more than five or six feet in length, having a head rather broad and depressed, and a body stouter in proportion to its length, than that of the eel. It is of a brownish black colour, by no means a taking animal to look at, and it is found nowhere but in the rivers of South America.

It was on the banks of the Oroonoko that Baron Humboldt had the opportunity of seeing this creature, and thoroughly testing its powers. He found a good deal of difficulty in accomplishing this latter, or even in procuring a specimen, as the shock which it administers, when first touched, is enough to paralyze a horse, and the Indians are very unwilling to encounter it. "They believe, indeed," writes Humboldt, "that the gymnoti may be touched with impunity by a man chewing tobacco, but their faith in this precaution is not practical." After long debate it was agreed that a number of horses should be driven into the pool, and receive the first shocks, after which the gymnoti might be handled with impunity. Accordingly about thirty wild horses and mules were hunted down from the savannah by the Indians, and forced to enter the water. The scene which ensued is thus described by Humboldt. "The extraordinary noise caused by the horses' hoofs, makes the fish issue from the mud, and excites them to combat. These yellowish and livid eels, resembling aquatic serpents, swim on the surface of the water, and crowd under the bellies of the horses and mules. A contest between animals of so different an organisation furnishes a very striking spectacle. The Indians, provided with harpoons and long slender reeds, surround the pool closely, and some climb upon the trees, the branches of which extend horizontally over the surface of the water: by their wild cries and the length of the reeds they prevent the horses from running away, and reaching the bank of the pool. The eels, stunned by the noise, defend themselves by the repeated discharge of their electric batteries. During a long time they seem to prove victorious; several horses sink beneath the violence of the invisible strokes, which they receive from all sides, in organs the most essential to life, and, stunned by the force and frequency of the shocks, disappear under the water: others, panting, with mane erect and haggard eyes, expressing anguish, raise themselves and endeavour to flee from the storm by which they are overtaken. They are driven back by the Indians into the middle of the water: but a small number succeed in eluding the active

vigilance of the fishermen. These regain the shore stumbling at every step, and stretch themselves on the sand, exhausted with fatigue, and their limbs benumbed with the electrical shocks of the gymnoti."

In less than five minutes two horses were drowned. The eel being five feet long, and pressing itself against the bellies of the horses, makes a discharge along the whole extent of its electric organ; the horses were probably not killed, only stunned. They were drowned from the impossibility of rising amid the prolonged struggle of the horses and the eels. When the gymnoti have expended their electric energy, they approach timidly the edge of the marsh, where they are taken by means of small harpoons fastened to long cords: when the cords are very dry, the Indians feel no shock in raising the fish in the air. In this manner several were captured, and carefully examined by our travellers. Some of them measured five feet three inches in length, and the Indians assert that they are sometimes seen of much greater length. The gymnotus is the largest of electrical fishes, and its action is so powerful, that Humboldt says, "he does not remember ever to have received from the discharge of a large Leyden jar a more dreadful shock than that which he experienced by imprudently placing his foot on a gymnotus just taken out of the water." ("Marit. and Int. Discov." III. 257.)

Chapter XX

The Sea-Serpent

THE most celebrated of all the monsters of the deep is one not hitherto mentioned, the Sea-serpent—whose existence has been affirmed and denied with equal pertinacity for a long period of years. Nor can the question be regarded as being even now clearly determined. It appears doubtful also whether—supposing we are to admit that there really is such an animal as travellers by sea have described—it is to be accounted as a reptile or a fish. Its proper place therefore is between these two descriptions of creatures.

The belief in the existence of the sea-serpent is a very ancient one. It is not certain what marine animal Pliny meant to describe under the name of *pristis,* and Ælian's description is equally obscure. But so far as we can gather anything definite, it is some sort of sea-serpent, of which he speaks. He mentions it as distinct from the whale, and as being of enormous size, two hundred cubits being the length to which he says it attains. The ship called the *pristis,* from its supposed resemblance to the creature, is represented as being very long and narrow. Ælian and Solinus in a great measure repeat Pliny's statements. Coming down to later times, Olaus Magnus the Swede, in the early part of the 16th century, affirms that "those who visit the coasts of Norway tell us of a very strange phenomenon,—namely, that there is in those seas a snake two hundred feet long, and twenty feet round, which lives in the hollows of the rocks, and under the cliffs about Bergen, and goes out on a moonlight night to devour

calves, sheep, and swine: or else it goes out to sea and catches crabs, starfish, &c. It has a mane two foot long: it is covered with scales, and has fiery eyes. It disturbs ships and raises itself up like a mast, and sometimes snaps some of the men from off the deck."

Ramus, in his description of Norway published a century and a half afterwards, says that "in the year 1687 a large sea-snake was seen by many people in Drausfiorden, and at one time by eleven people together."

Hans Egede, the Danish missionary, of whom mention was made in the last chapter, gives a minute account of a sea-serpent, though whether he saw it with his own eyes is not stated.

"A most dreadful monster," he says, "shewed itself upon the surface of the water in the year 1734, off our new colony, in the sixty-fourth degree of latitude. The monster was of so huge a size, that coming out of the water, its head reached as high as the mast-head: its body was as bulky as the ship, and three times as long. It had a long pointed snout, and spouted like a whale fish, great broad paws (fins?), and the body seemed covered with shell-work, its skin being very rugged and uneven. The under part of its body was shaped like an enormous huge serpent, and when it dived again under water, it plunged backward into the sea, and so raised its tail aloft, which seemed a whole ship's length distant from the bulkiest part of the body."

At the sessions held in the city of Bergen in 1751, a seaman named Kopper, an inhabitant of that city, made oath to the following effect:

"In the latter end of August, 1746, as I was on a voyage on my return from Trondheim, in a very calm and hot day, it happened that when we had arrived within six English miles of Molde, as I was reading a book, I heard a murmuring voice from amongst the men at the oars (who were eight in number), and observed that the man at the helm kept off from land. Upon this I inquired what was the matter, and was informed that there was a sea-snake before us. I then

ordered the man at the helm to keep to the land again, and to come up with this creature, of which I had heard so many stories. Though the fellows were under some apprehensions, they were obliged to obey my orders. In the meantime the sea-snake passed by us, and we were obliged to tack the vessel about, in order to get nearer to it. As the snake swam faster then we could row, I took my gun that was ready charged, and fired at it. On this it immediately plunged under water. We rowed to the place, where it had sunk down, and lay on our oars, thinking it would come up again to the surface. However it did not. The head of the snake, which it held more than two feet above the surface of the water, resembled that of a horse. It was of a greyish colour, and the mouth was quite black and very large. It had black eyes and a long, white mane, that hung down from the neck to the surface of the water. Besides the head and neck, we saw seven or eight folds, or coils, of the snake, which were very thick, and as far as I could guess, there was about a fathom's distance between each fold."

Pontoppidan, Bishop of Bergen, and Historian of Norway, whose descriptions of the mermaid and the kraken were referred to in the last chapter, gives a long account of the sea-serpent also, in the existence of which he fully believes, though he considers that the coast of Norway is the only one frequented by this creature. He describes it as being of a dark brown colour and white about the throat, with a kind of mane on the neck resembling a bunch of sea-weed. Its length varies in the narratives given by different persons who profess to have seen it; but this can hardly be considered as an objection to the correctness of the statements, considering that some of the alleged witnesses were tolerably near the animal, and some a considerable distance off, and that all only could have seen that portion which was at the moment above the water. The bishop quotes the evidence of several persons, who must be admitted to be highly respectable witnesses.

In the year 1808 an animal, apparently belonging to the serpent tribe, was stranded on the coast on Stronsay, one of

the Orkneys. It was seen by several trustworthy witnesses, by whom its measure was taken. This was found to be sixty-five feet as regards the length, and twelve as regards the circumference. The head was small, being not more than a foot, from the tip of the snout to the first vertebra of the neck. The neck itself was slender, about fifteen feet long. Commencing at the shoulders, and extending nearly the whole way along the back, was something resembling a bristly mane. There were three pairs of fins connected with the body, the remains, as Dr. Fleming suggests, of the pectoral, ventral, and caudal fins. The skin was smooth without scales and of a greyish colour.

In the same year Mr. M'Lean, the Parish minister of Eigg, saw—what he at least took to be—a serpent on the coast of Coll. He was in a boat, and the creature passed within a few yards of him. He describes the head as being somewhat broad and oval in shape, the neck was smaller than the head. Below the neck it widened out again, and thence it gradually tapered to the tail. No fins were visible, and it seemed to progress by an undulating movement under water, which carried it along very rapidly. It was seen by the crews of several fishing vessels who were in the neighbourhood at the time. This animal, it should be remarked, probably was not a serpent, whatever those seen by others may have been.

Dr. Hibbert, in his account of the Shetland Islands, affirms that the sea-serpent is occasionally seen in the Shetland seas, and specifies one which was observed off the coast of Dunrossness.

On the American coast in the neighbourhood of Cape Cod, these serpents are to be seen as frequently as off those of Norway. During the month of August, 1817, reports were so frequent in Massachusetts of a great sea-serpent having been seen close to the land, and also some little way out to sea, that a Society of Naturalists at Boston appointed a committee to examine into the matter, and report the result to them. From the statement drawn up in accordance with this, we learn the following particulars:—

On the 10th of August, 1817, the serpent was seen in the harbour of Gloucester, at a distance of about 130 yards. The head was raised about a foot above the water, and resembled that of a turtle; the colour of the skin was a dark brown. When seen it was moving rapidly through the water, at the pace, it was estimated, of twenty or from that to thirty miles an hour. It was seen a second time by the same person who had noticed it before, and this time it was lying quite still, so that he was enabled to get a good view of it, and judged that the portion floating on the top of the water was about fifty feet long and the circumference about that of a man's body. Solomon Allen, a shipmaster, also saw the animal in Gloucester harbour on three several occasions, and set down the length as being between eighty and ninety feet, and the thickness about half that of a barrel. The head was shaped like that of a rattlesnake but nearly as large as the head of a horse, and it was sometimes raised two feet or so above the water. It seemed to have bunches or protuberances on its back. It was considered by some of the *savants* that these were only caused by the vertical movements of the creature's body. Another sailor who had approached within thirty feet fired at it, but apparently did not hit it, for though immediately after the shot it plunged downwards, and disappeared, it soon came up again, and continued to play as before, being apparently noway disturbed at the occurrence. John Johnson saw it at a distance of about two oars' length, and judged it to be fully fifty feet long. W. Pearson, merchant, while sailing off Webber's cove, saw a strange marine animal, which he believed to be the same he had caught sight of several times in Gloucester harbour. It passed under the stern of his boat, at a distance of about thirty yards, and the part he saw he reckoned at about seventy feet long.

Besides the testimony of eleven persons who swore to having beheld the serpent in Gloucester harbour, the committee received the depositions of several persons, to the effect that they had seen the same creature off the coast of Maine some years before. The Rev. Abraham Cummings stated that in

Penobscot Bay, several years previously, a sea-serpent, thought to be about sixty feet long and as thick as the mast of a sloop, was frequently seen. He himself had seen it, and judged it to be about seventy feet in length. It was also seen by the British fleet during the American War of Independence, and they reported it to be three hundred feet long, but that Mr. Cummings reasonably considers an exaggeration. The committee were also informed—what however they do not seem to have believed—that in the year 1780 a schooner which was

lying in Penobscot Bay was nearly sunk by a marine monster of this kind, which leaped right over the vessel, striking it with its body as it passed! The men ran into the hold in a fright, which might well be excused under the circumstances.

About a month after the receipt of these depositions, a snake about three feet long, which had been killed on the seashore near Cape Ann, was sent to the Linnæan Society at Boston, and by them carefully examined. They considered it to be the young of the sea-serpent, and named it *Scoliophis Atlanticus*. The following is a description of it. "It has the general form and external characteristics of a serpent, but is distinguished from all others of that class, by a row of protuberances along the back, apparently formed by the undula-

tions of the spine." (It will be remembered that Solomon Allen insisted on it that the sea-serpent he saw in Gloucester Bay, had a series of protuberances on its back, exactly resembling these, and that his assertion was called in question by the Boston Naturalists. Also that Kopper stated that the animal he described had a "series of what he called coils, which were very thick," and which probably were identical with these protuberances.) "The body could be bent with facility upward and downward, a circumstance not common to other serpents. The body was covered with hexagonal flat scales, the colour of the head and of the upper part of the body and tail was a uniform deep brown, that of the belly and underpart of the tail a bluish lead colour, lightest in the middle. The animal is probably amphibious, nor was there anything in its structure peculiarly adapting it to a residence in the water, excepting only the remarkable facility of bending in a vertical direction. This is as important as a horizontal power of motion, to an inhabitant of the ocean, but comparatively useless to an animal confined to the land."

In 1845 there was exhibited at New York a gigantic fossil reptile, or sea-serpent, said to have been discovered by Dr. Albert Koch in the State of Alabama. The bones, according to the description, measured 114 feet in length. Professor Silliman remarked upon it, that "the skeleton differed most essentially from any existing or fossil serpent, though it may countenance the popular, and, I believe, well-founded impression, of the existence in our modern seas of huge animals, to which the name of sea-serpent has been attached." This skeleton was afterwards proved to have been made up by Dr. Koch from various fossil remains which he had collected from one source or another, but the trick was soon detected by American naturalists.

The controversy respecting the existence of the sea-serpent had gradually ceased to attract attention, when in October, 1848, it was suddenly revived by a report brought home by the *Dædalus* frigate that a sea-serpent of enormous size had been seen between the Cape of Good Hope and St. Helena.

Captain M'Quhae delivered an official report to the Admiralty which was published in the newspapers. He stated that at about five o'clock on the afternoon of the 6th of August in lat. 24° 44′ S., long. 9° 22′ E., Mr. Sartoris, a midshipman, reported to him and two of his officers who were walking the deck with him, that something very extraordinary was approaching the ship. "On our attention being called to the object," writes Captain M'Quhae, "it was found to be an enormous serpent, with head and shoulders kept about four feet constantly above the surface of the water, and, as nearly as we could approximate, by comparing it with the length of what our maintopsail yard would show in the water, there was at the very least sixty feet of the animal *à fleur d'eau,* no portion of which was, to our perception, used in propelling it through the water, either by vertical or horizontal undulation. It passed rapidly, but so close under our lee quarter, that had it been a man of my acquaintance, I should easily have recognised his features with the naked eye: and it did not, either in approaching the ship, or after it had passed our wake, deviate in the slightest degree from its course to the S.W.; which it held on at the pace of from 12 to 15 miles per hour, apparently on some determined purpose.

"The diameter of the serpent was about 15 or 16 inches behind the head, which was, without any doubt, that of a snake; and it was never, during the twenty minutes that it continued in sight of our glasses, once below the surface of the water. Its colour was a dark brown with a yellowish-white about the throat. It had no fins, but something like the mane of a horse, or rather a bunch of seaweed washed about its back. It was seen by the quarter-master, the boatswain's mate, and the man at the wheel, in addition to the officers above mentioned."

The publication of the report drew forth a letter from the celebrated Professor Owen, in which he stated that, in his opinion, Captain M'Quhae, misled by what he had read in Pontoppidan's description of these creatures, had mistaken for a serpent a large seal, which was seeking to recover the

iceberg on which it had travelled from the colder regions. He said that the head of the creature, as described by the captain, was not that of a snake; that all its characteristics—the vaulted cranium, the short muzzle, the colour, brown above and white beneath, and the long stiff body—were all of them significant of a warm-blooded animal, not of a fish or reptile. Further the professor stated that, though doubtless a sea-serpent was not an impossibility, it was extremely improbable that such a creature ever existed; otherwise surely in the great lapse of time during which naturalists had prosecuted their researches, some single specimen of the genus would have been discovered and preserved, to determine for ever the question at issue. He points out that the creature when dead would be thrown up on the sea-shore, if anywhere near land at the time of its death, and in any case would float for a considerable time, where its enormous carcase could hardly fail to be seen by a passing ship. He notes the case of the creature stranded on the coast of Stronsay, mentioned above, and pronounces it to have been, not a serpent, but a basking shark. He remarks also on the *Scoliophis Atlanticus,* and one or two other similar specimens; but says of them that they are too small, to be reckoned as any evidences of the existence of such huge marine monsters, as the sea-serpent is represented to be.

Captain M'Quhae replied with some indignation to the professor's letter. He asserted that the creature he saw was *not* a seal, nor anything like a seal—the great length and the different shape of the head rendering such an hypothesis impossible. He says that he and the others who observed the animal, saw it when sufficiently close, to make sure that it was a snake, and nothing else; and in reply to the observation as to his having been misled by Bishop Pontoppidan, adds that could not be true, as he had never heard of the bishop or his description of the sea-serpent either, until after his return to England. The coincidence, therefore, between his account and that of the old Norwegian, could not be explained in that manner.

Captain M'Quhae's letter also called forth several state-

ments of English officers and gentlemen, who affirmed that they themselves had seen the creature in question or been assured by persons on whose credibility they could fully rely, that they had seen it. Mr. Morris Sterling states that his friend Dr. Newmann, Bishop of Bergen, a man of research, learning and energy, had made the matter in question his study for twenty years. The amount of proof he had collected was sufficient to convince any one however sceptical. In one instance some fishermen saw the snake so close to them, that one of the party had the hardihood to strike it with his boat-hook. It immediately gave chase, and if they had not chanced to be close to a small rocky island on which they took refuge, they would in all likelihood have been killed by it.

The last appearance of the sea-serpent occurred little more than two years ago. Major Senior of the Bengal Staff Corps sent to the English newspapers the following narrative. "On the 28th of January 1879, at about 10 A. M., I was on the poop deck on the steamship *City of Baltimore,* in lat. 12° 28′ N., long. 43° 52′ E., I observed a long black object abeam of the stern, on the starboard side, at a distance of about three-quarters of a mile, darting rapidly out of the water and splashing in again, with a sound distinctly audible, and advancing nearer and nearer at a rapid pace. In a minute it had advanced to within half a mile, and was distinctly recognisable as the veritable sea-serpent. I shouted out 'Sea-Serpent! sea-serpent! call the captain!' Dr. C. Hall, the ship's surgeon, who was reading on deck, jumped up in time to see the monster, as did also Miss Greenfield, one of the passengers on board. By this time it was only about 500 yards off, and a little in the rear, owing to the vessel then steaming at the rate of about ten knots in hour in a westerly direction. On approaching the wake of the ship, the serpent turned its course a little away, and was soon lost to sight in the blaze of sunlight reflected on the waves of the sea. So rapid were its movements, that when it approached the ship, I seized a telescope, but could not catch a view, as it darted rapidly out of

the field of the glass, before I could see it. I was thus prevented from ascertaining whether it had scales or not, but the best view of the monster obtainable—when it was about three cables' length (that is about 500 yards) distant—seemed to shew that it was without scales. I cannot, however, speak with certainty. The head and neck, about two feet in diameter, rose out of the water to a height of about twenty or thiry feet; and the monster opened its jaws wide, as it rose, and closed them again as it lowered its head, and darted forward for a dive, re-appearing almost immediately some hundred yards ahead. The body was not visible at all, and must have been some depth under water, as the disturbance on the surface was too slight to attract notice, although occasionally a splash was to be seen at some distance behind the head. The shape of the head was not unlike pictures I have seen of the dragon, with a bull-dog appearance of the forehead and eyebrow. When the monster had drawn itself sufficiently out of the water, it let itself drop, as it were, like a huge log of wood, prior to darting forward under water."

The question as to whether the sea-serpent is a reality or a misconception, is still undetermined, and apparently is likely to remain so. There is certainly some huge marine monster, that either is a sea-serpent, or is very like one. The great mass of testimony, much of which is above all reasonable dispute, establishes that beyond cavil. But on the other hand, there are several objects in nature, which are likely enough to be mistaken for a serpent. A shoal of porpoises, leaping and tumbling behind one another, bears a considerable resemblance to the convolutions of a snake, especially if seen at some distance and by an uncertain light. A great mass of brown sea-weed, floating on the water, bears a still greater likeness to a slumbering serpent. A long narrow fish like the basking shark, has undoubtedly been mistaken for it. It is also not impossible that some of the largest sized boa-constrictors or pythons may have been seen, while endeavouring to cross from one island to another. And it must be remembered that even those who have had the best opportunity of

seeing these creatures, and may be quite competent to determine whether they are serpents or not, never get anything more than a hurried glance at them in passing, and that the greater part of their bodies is hidden from them. It is impossible to examine them with the minute and complete attention, which alone would set the question at rest. The conclusion arrived at by Dr. Mantell—than whom no one was more capable of determining the question—is the one which we shall do wisely to adopt. "With regard to the existence of the so-called sea-serpent," he writes, "I would beg to remark, that although it is highly improbable that an ophidian, or true snake, of the marine habits, and dimensions described by our voyagers, now exists, yet there is nothing to forbid the supposition that there are unknown living forms of cartilaginous fishes, presenting the general configuration and proportion of the animals," as drawn by Captain M'Quhae and others.

STRANGE REPTILES

Chapter XXI

The Basilisk—Salamander—Toad—Dragon—Serpent

PASSING on now to the strange monsters of the reptile and insect world, the idea at once presents itself that here we are likely to meet with at least as many "Travellers' Tales," as in any preceding chapter. For although the creatures it contains are not so difficult of examination as in the instance of the sea monsters of which we spoke in the last two chapters, man nevertheless approaches them with a feeling of repulsion and dislike, which induces him to credit many things, which, but for that, his sober judgment would reject. Man flies, with no worse feeling than terror, from monsters capable of swallowing his entire body, or shattering with a single blow of their tails the vessel which conveys him; but he regards with aversion and disgust the venemous reptile which lies in wait for his unguarded moments, a single puncture of whose tooth is always agony, and often, death. His hate and his fear alike cause him to exaggerate the baleful powers of the creature, between which and himself, there is mortal enmity.

Among the animals of this description—those respecting which the wildest fables have been circulated, are the basilisk and the salamander.

The basilisk is supposed by most commentators to be identical with the "cockatrice" of Scripture. The passage (Isaiah xi. 8) rendered in our version, "The weaned child shall put his hand on the *cockatrice's* den" is translated by St. Jerome "put his hand on the *basilisk's* den." Again (Isaiah xiv. 29):

"Out of the serpent's root shall go forth the *cockatrice*" stands in the Vulgate, "Out of the serpent's root shall go forth the *basilisk*." In one or two passages also in which our translators give the word "adder,"—as *e.g.*, "It biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder," (Proverbs xxiii. 32), and again, "Thou shalt tread upon the lion and the *adder*" (Psalm xci. 13)—the more ancient versions read in each instance the "basilisk." Jerome, no doubt, and they who were of his way of thinking, considered that the adder, though that word might rightly render the Hebrew original, was not a sufficiently deadly and malevolent creature to satisfy the meaning of the inspired writer.

Certainly the terrors with which they have invested their basilisk, are sufficiently dreadful to express the utmost extent of diabolical malignity and power. To begin with its generation—that was fully as marvellous as anything connected with it. It was supposed to be hatched "from a cock's egg, which had been sat upon by a toad or a snake." But as the existence of a cock's egg was in itself a stumbling-block to naturalists, it was suggested that a hen's egg might suffice to produce the monster, if it was placed in a ditch full of serpents, abominable refuse matter, arsenic, and other deadly poisons.

When it came into the world it was a fearful creature indeed. It had eight feet, a crooked snout, a crown on its head and a terrible voice. It was every way desirable that it should make full use of this last-named property (a rare one in the instance of a serpent) if it was only to warn people of its approach. Its breath burned up whatever it came near; everything animal or vegetable died, as soon as its presence was felt. Whoever caught sight of its eye fell instantly dead. It was not necessary that the basilisk should intend to kill, or even to look at any one. The mere sight of its eye was like a fiery arrow piercing the brain. Its touch caused the flesh to fall from the bones; wherever it came, the herbage perished, and the rocks split into fragments.

It did not move, like other serpents, by lateral inflexion, but

walked upright and straight, by an unknown mode of progression; other dragons and snakes everywhere acknowledging its royalty, which was symbolised by the aforementioned coronet of white spots. If encountered and slain by a mounted warrior, it still had its revenge, for the venom would pass up the spear into the horseman and through the horseman into the horse, and both would fall dead!

Pliny, Ælian, Solinus and a host of others have statements respecting this creature which are each more extravagant than the others. The supersition lasted all through the Dark and Middle Ages; and saints and holy men are continually related to have delivered their neighbours and countrymen from its ravages, by the efficacy of their prayers.

It was, not unreasonably, objected by some persons, that that part of the story, which relates how every one who chanced to catch sight of the basilisk's eye was straightway struck dead—could not very well be true, because, if such were the fact, who would there be to report it? But small difficulties of this kind did not deter believers. They triumphantly replied that those who went in quest of the basilisk carried with them mirrors, in which they saw the reflection of its eye, but not the eye itself. Sometimes they added that this contrivance was fatal—not to the adventurer but to the basilisk itself, for if the latter by any chance cast a look in the direction of the mirror, he had his own deathful glance cast back upon him, and so perished, by a kind of poetical justice, by his own weapon.

Yet terrible and invincible as the creature was, it was liable to be attacked and slain by a very humble antagonist. This was a species of weasel, which paid no respect to the withering glance, before which all the rest of the creation quailed. It ran straight at the basilisk, and never ceased biting and tearing it, till the latter was conquered and killed. When the weasel felt the deadly virus of its poison, it ran aside, and ate some herb, which the basilik was unable to wither, and then returned to the charge.

Under all this wild fable a real creature may be recognised

due allowance of course being made for multiplied exaggeration. The upright posture, in which the animal was supposed to walk, the fabled coronet on the head, the deadly venom, and the insignificant enemy, which alone is able to vanquish it—all point to the Cobra da Capello as the original of the basilisk. This snake when it is enraged, erects itself on its tail, and darts straight forward. The hood on its head has caused it to be sometimes called the crowned serpent, and its poison is the most sure and rapid of any known reptile. In this country a man who was unwise enough to handle a cobra, and was bitten in consequence, died in less than two hours of the wound. But in the hotter regions, of which it is a native, and where the venom is more active in its operation, death often ensues from its bite in half an hour. In the weasel also, and the herb it devours, we recognise the mangoose, which protects itself in the manner described, by eating a herb indigenous to the country where the cobra is found, and so neutralises the serpent's bite.

Nor is it difficult to understand whence these monstrous exaggerations have arisen. The intention doubtless was to render the sayings of Holy Scripture more solemn and significant. The creature really chosen by the prophets, as the type of evil, was simply the snake, whether the adder or not, may be doubtful. But that seemed to enthusiasts not to be nearly malignant and deadly enough for the purpose; and therefore every image of horror or suffering, which the terrors of men associated with serpents, magnified a hundredfold, was imputed to the "evil beast" in question: and a frightful and terrible creature they certainly succeeded in producing.

It is hard to suggest any sufficient reason why the comparatively harmless creature called the Salamander, should have been made the subject of the strange fables imputed to it. But the heavy charges brought against it, and the marvellous properties with which it was supposed to be endued—though doubtless falling far short of what was attributed to the basilisk—are nevertheless enough to cause wonder alike at the fertile invention, and the marvellous credulity, of men.

It was regarded by the ancients as one of the most venomous of animals. Pliny, who, as usual, is foremost in extravagance of assertion, says, "Among all venomous creatures, the injury caused by the salamander is the greatest. For other creatures injure individuals, and do not kill more than one at a time; not to say that they are said to die of remorse after they have struck a man, and never again to be admitted to the earth! But a salamander is able to kill whole quantities of men at a time, without being disturbed in mind. For if it have crawled upon a tree, it infects all the fruit upon the tree with poison, and kills all those who may chance to eat of it, with a chill which resembles the effects of hemlock. Nay, if a salamander so much as touch with the tip of its foot the wooden vessel in which bread is baked, it poisons all the bread; or if it falls into a well, it poisons all the water. If its saliva touches any part of the human body, though only the very end of the foot, all the hair falls off."

Nicander gives an appalling picture of the symptoms produced by its bite. There was a proverb, that he who was bitten by a salamander had need of as many physicians as there are spots on the animal—a curious version of the proverb, "That in the multitude of counsellors there is safety." There is also another proverb, of a still more gloomy character, "If a salamander bites you, put on your shroud." These fables had taken such strong hold on the popular fancy, that it was thought worthy of record that a man, who had eaten a whole salamander, which his wife had administered to him, in the hope of becoming a widow, had nevertheless survived the treatment. The foundation for these stories, doubtless is the fact, that in the warty glands with which the salamander is covered, is secreted a glutinous and acrid fluid; which, though incapable of affecting larger and more highly organised animals, does injure and even kill some creatures which are less tenacious of life. An Italian naturalist says that he saw a salamander eject some of this fluid into the mouths of two lizards that attacked it. One of the two died immediately,

and the other in about two minutes. Yet chemists have tasted this fluid, which they found very acrid and astringent, but it did them no injury.

This property of ejecting a fluid is, in all likelihood, the origin of the still more extravagant belief, that a salamander could not be burnt—that it not only resisted the action of fire, but extinguished it, and indeed, when it saw a fire, attacked it as an enemy, and put it out!

Aristotle cites the salamander as an evidence of his statement, that there are animals over which flame has no power, but he is careful not to make the assertion in his own person. His words are, "The salamander, *as they say,* when it goes through fire, extinguishes it." Ælian says that not only will it live in the flame, but that it attacks fire as though it were its enemy. The traditional belief of the incombustibility of the salamander descended from generation to generation. It is shocking to think how many of these unhappy lizards have suffered the most frightful torments in consequence. To add to their miseries, the alchemists believed that the body of the salamander had the power of transmuting quicksilver into gold. The wretched animal was placed on the bottom of the crucible, and the molten quicksilver poured upon it. One would hope that this horrible death was at least instantaneous.

In the Middle Ages, there seems to have arisen a further belief that a kind of cloth might be made from the skin of this creature, which was proof against fire. A salamander cloth of this kind, said to be made of salamander's wool, is related to have been sent by the Khan of Tartary, to one of the Popes, to make a wrapper for the Holy Napkin. But Marco Polo, who relates this fact, was shrewd enough to know in the first place, that no animal's body could resist fire, and in the second, that the wrapper in question had been made from some mineral substance, dug out of the mountains, and which appears to be what we call asbestos. Salamander's wool, indeed, might well be a puzzle to naturalists.

The belief, however, in the ability of this creature to ex-

tinguish fire was still entertained, even by professed naturalists, down to quite modern times. In Vol. I, "Philos. Transac." (p. 140), we find the following:—

"M. Steno states that a knight called Corbini had assured him, that having cast a salamander, brought by him out of the Indies, into the fire, the animal thereupon swelled presently, and then emitted a quantity of thick slimy matter, which put out the coals that were in contact with it. To this the salamander retired immediately, putting them out in the same manner again, as soon as rekindled, and by this means saving

himself from the force of the fire for the space of two hours. The gentleman was then unwilling to hazard the creature any further."

As late as 1789 there was an attempt to revive these wondrous tales. M. Pothonier, the French Consul at Rhodes, tells us that while he was sitting in his chamber there, he heard a loud outcry in his kitchen. Thither he ran, and found his cook in a horrible fright, because, as he informed his master, he had seen the devil in the fire. M. Pothonier states that he looked into the fire, which was a bright one; and there saw a little animal with open mouth and palpitating throat. He took the tongs and endeavoured to secure it. At his first

attempt, the animal, which had been motionless up to that time for two or three minutes, ran into a corner of the chimney, having lost the tip of its tail in escaping, and buried itself in a heap of hot ashes. In his second attempt the consul was successful. He drew the animal out, which he describes as a kind of small lizard, plunged it into spirits of wine, and gave it to M. Buffon. But a naturalist, who soon afterwards came to Rhodes, and saw the specimen in question, noticed that the feet and some parts of the body, so far from having resisted the flames, were half roasted. The truth appears to be, that the animal does possess the power of emitting a tolerably copious fluid, which might subdue for the moment, or even put out, a flame which was not very strong; but that it should remain for any time unhurt in the midst of burning matter, is idle fable.

The strange fancies connected with toads are not so monstrous as those relating to the two creatures above named, but they are absurd enough nevertheless. The Roman writers of the first century represented the toad as full of deadly poison. Ælian improves on this, by adding that inhaling its breath, nay, the very sight of it, would cause death. The same belief prevailed for many subsequent centuries. Shakspeare includes the toad among the contents of the witches' diabolical caldron—indeed, as the primest of the ingredients.

> "Toad, that under coldest stone,
> Days and nights hast thirty-one,
> Sweltering venom sleeping got,
> Boil thou first i' the charmèd pot."

It is, nevertheless, one of the most harmless of reptiles: its body containing nothing of a poisonous nature, and its habits being useful to man in destroying many insects.

It was further believed not only to be replete with venom, but to carry in itself the antidote thereto. It was thought that its head contained a stone, which was a cure for, and preservative from, all poisons. But in order to be effectual, the creature must be made, while still alive, to disgorge this

stone on a piece of red cloth placed for the purpose. The reader will remember Shakepeare's reference to this fancy also.

> "Sweet are the uses of adversity,
> Which, like the toad, ugly and venomous,
> Bears yet a precious jewel in its head."
> *As You Like it,* iv. 1.

The stone, when obtained, was so effectual against poison, that even when set in a ring and worn on the finger, it would counteract its effects. This curious superstition is due to a confusion between the living reptile and the stone known as "Toadstone," to which also sanative properties were ascribed. In ignorance of the fact that the stone had been so called merely because it was speckled in a manner resembling the skin of a toad, the fancy grew up that its name was due to its being found inside the reptile.

But the greatest among the marvels related of the toad is its supposed power of living for any number of years, enclosed in cavities formed in the hearts of trees or solid rocks. Of these a great many examples might be cited. About the beginning of this century, workmen were employed in repairing Ealing Church. An old stone which had belonged to the building—certainly for some hundreds of years—was removed and broken up, when a live toad was found in a hollow within it. In a stone quarry near Cassel, three living toads were found lying together. They were enclosed in an empty space within a huge stone four feet long, and three broad. In the Memoirs of the Academy of Sciences, there is an account of a toad found alive in the heart of a very thick elm; and of another discovered in 1781 in the centre of an oak. In the latter instance, from the size of the tree, it was concluded that the toad could not have been shut in for less than seventy or eighty years. There are a great many similar instances; and in all of them it is usual to assert that there was no crack in the stones or wood, through which air could have been admitted. But it is difficult to see how people could be sure of this. Not expecting to find any such inmate, the workpeople

are not likely to examine the tree or the stone previously to the fracture, and after it, it is very difficult to ascertain what their former condition had been.

Dr. Buckland tried an experiment which may be said to have set the question at rest. He enclosed several toads in hollows cut out of sand, and other stones, the entrances to which he carefully covered and secured with cement. They were then buried, and dug up again after the interval of more than a year. Nearly all the toads were dead, and most of them had been dead a long time. In the instances where they still survived, it was evident that there had been a slight crack, which allowed the admission of a small quantity of air. The conclusion at which the doctor arrived was that toads could no more live, than any other animals, in places from which air was wholly excluded.

The Dragon is a creature of frequent occurrence in Eastern and other allegories, especially among the Jews and Chinese. With the Greeks and Romans it was a monster dangerous to man, furnished with four legs and two wings, having the head and body of a fiery serpent. Some believe the crocodile to have been the creature which suggested these fancies, and it is known that there are some crocodiles, notably those in the island of Celebes, which will attack a man. But the crocodile has no wings, and does not vomit fire. It is more likely that the meteor called *Draco volans,* which is frequent in marshy countries, originated the notion. In hot weather, this exhalation will sometimes mount into the air, and float above the marsh. Its appearance is that of an oblong, or sometimes roundish, fiery body with a long tail. It will be remembered that dragons are commonly said to frequent swamps and marshes. Every boy knows how largely the dragon enters into the legends of folk lore of all countries—how a monster of this kind lays waste a whole neighbourhood, devouring the fruits of the earth, poisoning the rivers, killing the luckless inhabitants and sometimes insisting on some beautiful damsel being surrendered to him—how at last a valiant knight sallies forth to encounter this terrible enemy, and succeeds, after a

desperate combat, in slaying it, being, of course, rewarded with the hand of the rescued maiden.

The reader will scarcely require to be told that the dragon, as above described, does not exist upon earth, and never has existed at any period of which there is historical record. Modern science gives the name of dragon to a tribe of Saurians, one variety of which is called the winged dragon. This is a little harmless creature, a native of the island of Java. It has the serpent's head and tail, four legs, and a kind of double fan on its shoulders, which when spread, enables it to skim through the air from bough to bough. Though these fans are not wings, and cannot beat the air as those of a bird do, they greatly resemble them. When these fans are expanded, if the creature were greatly magnified, it would very nearly resemble the dragon of fable. But this is the nearest approach which Nature furnishes [1] to the monster of the legendary tale. Wherever the word "dragon" occurs in Scripture, we must understand "Serpents" to be meant.

These latter have a real enough existence, but their size too has often been greatly exaggerated. As many "Travellers' Tales" are told upon this subject as on any other. It will be well to mention some of these. We shall find here too that the nearer we approach to modern times, the more do the proportions of the creatures diminish.

The earliest instance of one of these enormous reptiles is that given by Valerius Maximus ("De Mirac." I. 8 § 19) who quotes from one of the lost books of Livy. "In the river Bagrada," he says, "distant about thirty miles from Carthage, there was a serpent found of such size, that it cut off the army of Regulus from using the river. After many of the soldiers had been seized in its huge mouth, and many more crushed by the folds of its tail, and its hide was found to be impenetrable to javelins and darts, it was at last attacked by means of the military engines, and crushed by repeated blows

[1] I mean which Nature *now* furnishes. The extinct *Saurian,* called the Pterodactyl, no doubt accorded very nearly, though not entirely, with the creature described as the dragon. But were Pterodactyls ever co-existent with men, so that the latter could have derived the idea of the dragon from them?

from heavy stones. It seemed to the legionaries a more terrible foe, than Carthage itself: and the pools had been so polluted by its blood, and the whole surrounding country poisoned by the effluvia from its carcase, that the Roman camp had to be removed elsewhere. The skin, a hundred and twenty feet in length, was stripped off and conveyed to Rome." Pliny (N. H. VIII. 14) reports the same, and adds that this skin, which he too reckons at a hundred and twenty feet in length, was preserved in a temple at Rome until the time of the Numantine war.

Diodorus Siculus reports that in Egypt during the reign of one of the Ptolemies, a monstrous snake, a python it is to be presumed, thirty cubits in length, was taken alive. When attacked it retreated into a cove, before the mouth of which its pursuers spread a strong net. They then frightened it, by clashing together some steel implements, and the serpent darting out of the cave, fell into the toils, from which it could not disengage itself, nothwithstanding its vast strength. It was safely transported to Alexandria.

Posidonius relates that, *circa* B.C. 100, in Cœle-Syria, a dead serpent was found, two hundred feet in length, and of such bulk, that men on horseback stationed on either side of it could not see one another. The opening of its mouth was so large that a mounted man could ride into it.

Suetonius (Octavius, 43) mentions among other curiosities exhibited at Rome a serpent seventy-five feet in length, which was shewn in the forum in front of the Comitium.

Aristotle speaks of serpents in Africa, which are as long as ships of war, and by which a trireme might be overturned. Megasthenes says they are so large in India as to be able to swallow down the entire carcase of a stag or bull. Another early writer records the ravages of a two-headed (!) serpent eighty-five feet long, in Etruria, which was at last killed by lightning. El Kazweenee affirms the same as Megasthenes as to Indian serpents swallowing buffaloes &c. whole, and adds that when they had finished their meal, they would twist

themselves round large trees, and in that manner crush up the bones of the animals they had swallowed. But nothing can approach the statements of Pliny, who not only affirms that serpents are to be found in Ethiopia two hundred cubits long, but adds that on the sea-board of that country four or five of these monsters, when they wish to transport themselves to another country, will plait their bodies crosswise into a huge raft, and launching themselves on the deep, and lifting up their heads, to serve as sails to catch the wind, are in that way carried over to the shore of Arabia! Even this hardly equals the "Travellers' Tale" to be found in his next chapter, where he relates how the elephant's blood is the coolest to be found in the body of any animal. Wherefore it is greatly sought after by the serpents, who lie in wait for the elephants when they go down to drink. Then they seize them by the ear, to which part the elephants are unable to bring round their trunks. They are large enough to suck up the whole of the blood contained in their victim's carcase; and the result is that the elephant dies from loss of blood, and the serpent from repletion!

As regards these statements of ancient writers respecting the serpents of their time—while they differ a good deal from one another, as to the measurement they assign them—they yet agree in representing their size in some instances to have been at least three times as great as modern experience allows. It is difficult to account for this. Many of these authors, as for example, Aristotle and Suetonius, are careful and trustworthy writers, and it does not appear that their statements were ever questioned by their contemporaries. We can hardly assume that they stated what they knew to be false, or even what they had not sufficient reason for accounting true. We should rather believe, that as in the instance of the birds and beasts of prodigious bulk, so also in that of the serpents, there has been a gradual diminution in size as centuries passed on. Indeed it is most likely that these huge monsters so destructive to human life, the great size of which made it impossible for them to escape notice, would either be destroyed by man,

or recede before his advance into solitudes, which as yet he had not penetrated.

The statements of modern travellers present certainly a curious contrast to those of their predecessors. The largest serpent recorded by any of them is that mentioned in the "Oriental Annual" a few years ago. "The captain of a country ship," says the writer, "while passing the Sunderbunds, sent a boat into one of the creeks to obtain some fresh fruits. Having reached the shore, the crew moored the boat under the bank, and left one of the party to take care of her. During their absence, overcome by the heat, he lay down under the seats and fell asleep. While he was in this state of unconsciousness, an enormous python emerged from the jungle, reached the boat, had already coiled its huge body round the sleeper, and was in the very act of crushing him to death, when his companions fortunately returned, and attacking the monster severed a portion of its tail, which so disabled it, that it no longer retained the power of doing mischief. The snake was then easily despatched, and was found to measure sixty-two feet and some inches" ("Museum Anim. N." II. 111). This so greatly exceeds in length any other serpent described by modern travellers, that the narrative must be accepted with caution.

A similar incident is said to have occurred in the island of Celebes, but with a more disastrous result. A Malay proa had been anchored for the night off the island. One of the crew went on shore in search of betel-nuts, and (it is supposed) fell asleep on the beach. In the dead of the night his companions were awakened by dreadful screams. They immediately went on shore, but arrived too late. The cries had ceased, and the man had breathed his last in the folds of an enormous serpent, which they killed. The disfigured body showed that the man had been crushed by the constriction of the reptile round the head, neck, breast, and thigh.

Lequat assures us that he saw a python, the measurement of which was fifty feet, and Carli, that in Congo they are found forty feet long. Cleyer found in the stomach of a

python the entire carcase of a full-grown deer. Prince Maurice of Nassau reports that in South America he had seen stags and other bulky animals gorged by serpents. A skin, thirty-six feet in length, of a snake which had been killed at Berlin, was sent as a present to the Prince of Orange, and is still preserved in the museum at The Hague. There is another, thirty-two feet long, in the British Museum. Dr. Andrew Smith reports having examined a snake in Natal, the measurement of which was twenty-five feet, though a portion of the tail was wanting.

STRANGE INSECTS

Chapter XXII

Fabulous Insects—Beetles—Scorpions—Locusts—Ants

FEWER tales appear to be told of the strange properties imputed to insects than of any other portion of the animal kingdom. The only purely mythical insect of which I have any knowledge is the Samir, by the help of which King Solomon is said to have built the Temple at Jerusalem. It will be remembered that, in the narrative given by the sacred historian, it is recorded that "there was neither hammer, nor axe, nor any tool of iron heard in the house, while it was building" (I Kings vi. 7). This implies no more than that the stones were shaped and fitted to each other elsewhere, and then brought to the site of the Jewish Temple and cemented in their places without the use of any iron tool. This was no doubt done under divine direction, and was designed to symbolize the manner in which the Church of the First-born is "built up" of those living stones, the faithful in Christ; who are shaped and formed in the quarries of this present world, and then taken away to fill their proper places in the world above. But the more fanciful among the Jews understood that not only was no tool of iron employed in putting together the stones on Mount Moriah, but none in hewing them out of the quarries. They tell a story how Solomon, having worsted in battle the evil demon Asmodeus, compelled him to disclose to him some mode by which stones might be cut and squared without the employment of iron. Almighty God, say they, had forbidden Moses to build any

altar of hewn stones, because the touch of the cruel iron, by which so much human blood is shed, would pollute it. The same rule, they affirmed, applied to the building of the Temple. But the stones must be broken and squared somehow, and the task of showing how was imposed on Asmodeus. Under the pressure of Solomon's overmastering power, the demon directed him to search for a moor-hen's nest, and cover it with a broad plate of glass which the bird would be unable to remove. It would then, the demon said, go away and fetch a small worm from the sea, the touch of which would in a moment break the hardest substances. Solomon followed the directions given him, and in this manner became possessed of samir, which he used in splitting and squaring[1] the stones designed for the Temple. According to Stackhouse, the foundation of this wild fable is a mistake made in the interpretation of the word samir, which really means a hard stone used to cut and polish other stones, and not an insect.

Mr. Baring Gould ("Curious Myths," p. 386), gives several versions of this marvellous tale, in some of which the bird which finds samir (or schamir, as he spells it), is sometimes a moor-hen, sometimes a raven, sometimes an eagle. Schamir itself is sometimes a worm and sometimes a stone, agreeably to Stackhouse's notion. Mr. Gould quotes a similar tale from that highly interesting book the "Gesta Romanorum," which runs as follows:—

There lived at Rome a noble Emperor, Diocletian by name, who loved the virtue of compassion above all other things. (!) Therefore he desired to know which of all the birds was the most kindly affectioned towards its young. One day the emperor was wandering in the forest, when he lit upon the nest of a great bird called the ostrich, in which was the mother with her young. The king took the nest, along with the poults, to the palace, and put it into a glass vessel. This the mother-bird saw, and unable to reach her little ones, she

[1] I have not thought it necessary to enter on the disputed question as to whether the temple was built of squared, or rough unhewn stone, since it does not concern the present subject. But there is nothing in the sacred narrative to imply that the latter was the case.

returned into the wood, and after an absence of three days, came back with a worm in her beak, called thamir. This she dropped on the glass, and by the power of the worm the glass was shivered, and the young flew away after their mother. When the emperor saw this, he highly commended both the sagacity and the affection of the ostrich. According to another legend it was Solomon who tried this experiment. He shut up the ostrich's chick in a glass bottle, whereupon the ostrich fled into the wilderness and returned with the worm.

The Beetle is, in itself, a common place insect enough, but of it also curious conceits have been entertained. Some nations have regarded it with superstitious reverence. The Egyptians in ancient, and the Hottentots in modern, times, have even rendered it divine worship. The scarabæus is frequently figured on monuments in Egypt, sometimes with its wings opened, sometimes with its wings closed, but in both instances as the object of religious reverence. Charms and amulets of gold and precious stones were made after the shape of this insect, and worn suspended round the neck. It was regarded as sacred to the sun, the emblem of light and vital heat, probably from the splendour of its appearance, though Pliny assigns a different, and a very characteristic reason for it.

The Mantis, or Praying Beetle, was similarly worshipped by the Hottentots. It obtained its singular name (the "religious or holy prophet") because its appearance predicted a season of famine (as some writers say), or because the peculiar manner in which it holds up its fore-feet, and remains in that attitude for a great length of time, suggests the idea that it is engaged in prayer. "So divine a creature is this esteemed," says a French writer, "that if a child were to ask of it its way to any place, the beetle would stretch out its feet and show him the right way, and seldom or never miss." The Turks also show the greatest veneration for this insect, which, they are convinced, passes a considerable part of its time in prayer. Sad to say, however, the devotion of the mantis is as hollow as that of many of its human anti-

types. The attitude which has awakened so much reverence is nothing more or less than the one in which it watches for its prey! "Should the insect it desires to seize be overhead and out of its reach, it slowly erects its long neck, and elevates itself on its hind-legs,"—so say the natural history books,—"it snaps up the insect. If it fails, it does not draw back its paws, but holds them still stretched out, and waits until the insect is again within its reach, when it springs up and seizes it."

But however unfounded its pretensions to prophecy or devotion may be, it is certainly (or rather was [2]) an object of the deepest veneration among the Namaqua tribes. "The Hottentots," writes Kolben, the South African traveller, "adore, as a benignant Deity, a certain insect, peculiar, it is said, to those countries. This animal is of the dimensions of a child's little finger; the back is green, the belly speckled white and red. It is provided with two wings and two horns. To this little winged Deity, whenever they set eyes on it, they render the highest tokens of veneration. If it honours their kraal with a visit, the inhabitants assemble round it with transports of devotion, as if the Lord of the Universe had come among them. If the insect happens to alight on a Hottentot, he is looked upon as a man without guilt, and distinguished and reverenced as a saint, and the delight of the Deity ever after. They declared to me, that if the Deified insect had been killed, all their cattle would certainly have been destroyed by wild beasts, and they themselves—every man, woman, and child of them—brought to a miserable end." (Kolben's Travels, Vol. I., p. 99.)

The small beetle, called the Death-watch, is likewise the subject of a very strange superstition. It commonly chooses for its abode old and decayed wood, and the tapping of its mandible against this causes a noise resembling the ticking of a watch; which is thought to indicate the approaching death of someone, generally of the person who hears it.

[2] *Was,* because the Namaquas have been so scattered of late years, that they have ceased to be a separate nation.

Heard in the solitude of the night the sound has a very weird and uncanny effect, and it is perhaps no great wonder, if superstitious people are uncomfortably affected by it.

The stories related about another insect, the Scorpion—do not attribute anything supernatural to it, but they are extravagant enough nevertheless. The creature is to be found in Europe, where it seldom exceeds four inches in length, inflicting a wound which is painful, but rarely mortal. It inhabits tropical countries also, but there it sometimes grows nearly to the size of a large lobster, and its sting is extremely dangerous. It is said to be the most savage of all created things. It will bite, without provocation, whatever animal may fall in its way, destroying in this way even its own species. If a number of scorpions are shut up together in any confined space, they will straightway attack and destroy one another. Maupertuis shut up a female with some of its own young. The mother speedily killed all of them except one, which escaped by climbing on to the old one's back, where it presently avenged its brothers and sisters by stinging its respected parent to death.

But truculent as the scorpion is, it has been credited with an amount of irascibility which it does not merit. It is said that, if it be encircled with a ring of fire through which it cannot make its way, it will wreak its fury upon the only living thing within its reach—that is to say, itself—and drive its sting into its own brain. It is to this belief that Lord Byron refers in his poem of the Giaour.

"The mind that broods o'er guilty woes,
Is like the scorpion girt by fire,
In circle narrowing as it glows,
The flames around their victim close
Till inly searched by thousand throes,
And maddening in its ire,
One sad and sole relief she knows
The sting she nourish'd for her foes,
Whose venom never yet was vain,
Gives but one pang, and cures all pain,
And darts into her desperate brain."

It is said to have been a common experiment towards the end of the last century, in Gibraltar—and Dr. Goldsmith, in his "Animated Nature," says he has been assured of such a fact by many eye-witnesses—to take a scorpion newly caught, and surround him with burning charcoal. When he perceives the impossibility of escape, he stings himself on the back of the head and instantly expires. Maupertuis tried this experiment, but not with the expected result: and some who believe that the scorpion, so situated, really does kill himself, maintain that the act is not intentional on the creature's part, but is a mere convulsive movement caused by terror. It is certain that no other instance has been produced in which any animal—man only excepted—wilfully destroyed its own life. "Others however," writes Lord Byron, "have brought in a verdict of *felo de se.*" "The scorpions," he adds, "are surely interested in a speedy decision of the question. If once established as insect Catos, they will probably be allowed to live as long as they please, without being martyred for the sake of an hypothesis." Pliny tells a story about serpents, which may well match with this of the scorpion. "The herb betony," he says, "is not only a sovereign remedy against their bites, but is absolute destruction to them whenever they encounter it." "If the snakes," he says, "are enclosed in a circle composed of this herb, *they will flog themselves to death!*"

Locusts and Ants have never, to my knowledge, been represented as endued with any supernatural qualities. But their history, nevertheless, is full of wonder—the first named, from their astonishing multitude and the devastation they cause; the second, for their intelligence, and the power of combination they display. The locusts are styled in Scripture (Joel ii.) the "great army of God," or sometimes the "Northern army," because they entered the Holy Land from Syria, which lies to its north. They are rightly likened to an invading host which ravages the whole country through which it passes. The description given of them in the Book of Exodus is a faithful picture not only of what occurred on that occa-

sion, but on a great many others. "They covered the whole face of the earth, so that the land was darkened: and they did eat every herb of the land, and all the fruit of the trees, which the hail had left, and there remained not any green thing in the trees, or in the herb of the field throughout all the land of Egypt."

Livy relates that in the year B.C. 203, vast clouds of this insect were carried into Italy; and Orosius records a similar visitation a few years afterwards. Augustine, A.D. 354, gives a terrible picture of the devastations they commit, which all subsequent writers confirm.

"When separately viewed," says one traveller, "they are extremely curious and very pleasing; but considered collectively as the destroyers of a country, they appear in an awful light. Desolation and famine mark their progress: all the expectations of the husbandman vanish; his fields which the rising sun beheld covered with luxuriance, are before evening a desert: the produce of his garden and his orchard is equally destroyed, for where these destructive swarms alight, not a leaf is left upon the trees, not a blade of grass in the pasture, not an ear of corn in the field. All wear the marks of dreadful devastation—to be renewed no more until the next rainy season. Soon after my arrival at Bawche, I saw a flight of locusts, extending above a mile in length, and half as much in breadth. They appeared, as the sun was in the meridian, like a black cloud at a distance: as they approached from the East, the density of the host obscured the solar rays, cast an awful gloom like that of an eclipse over the garden, and caused a noise like the rushing of a torrent."

Another traveller, Mr. Barrow, states that in the southern parts of Africa, an area of nearly two thousand square miles might be said to be covered with them. "When driven into the sea by the north-west wind, they formed, for fifty miles along the shore, a bank three or four feet high, and when the wind was south-east, the stench was so powerful, as to be smelt at the distance of a hundred and fifty miles."

They occasionally, though comparatively rarely, visit Eu-

rope, even its northern parts. If their ravages were as great there as in tropical countries, whole districts would be depopulated, because, when the vegetation is destroyed in those lands, it cannot be repaired until the recurrence of the next rainy season, whereas in tropical lands, plants grow up at all seasons of the year. In 1650 they overran Russia, the climate of which during the summer, it should be remembered, is extremely warm. The whole face of the country is said to have borne the appearance of being covered, as it were, with a black cloth, and the forest-trees bent under their weight. They visited England in 1748, and great fears were entertained of the destruction they might cause. But our cold climate and humid soil are unfavourable to them. They all perished at the first approach of winter, and left not a single one of their number to carry on the breed.

The following description of the devastation caused by a flight of locusts, coming as it does from the pen of the most powerful writer of our day, will interest the reader.

"The swarm grew and grew, until it became a compact body, as much as a furlong square, yet it was but the vanguard of a series of similar hosts formed one after another out of the hot mould or sand rising into the air, like clouds enlarging into a dusky canopy and then discharged against the fruitful plain. At length the huge innumerous mass was put into motion, and began its career, darkening the face of day. For twelve miles did they extend from front to rear, and their whizzing and hissing sounds could be heard for six miles on every side of them. The bright sun, though hidden by them, illumined their bodies and was reflected from their quivering wings: and as they fell heavily earthward, they seemed like the innumerable flakes of a yellow-coloured snow. And like snow did they descend, a living carpet, or rather pall, upon fields, crops, gardens, copses, orchards, groves, vineyards, olive woods, orangeries, palm plantations, and the deep forests, sparing nothing within their reach; and, where there was nothing to devour, lying helpless in drifts, or crawling forward obstinately, as they best might, with the hope of prey.

Their masses filled the ravines and hollow ways, impeding the traveller as he rode forward on his journey, and trampled by thousands under his horses' hoofs." ("Callista," by J. H. Newman.)

Prodigious as is the number of these locusts, and terrible as the havoc they occasion, the other insects above named—the Ants—though greatly inferior in size, are often found to be quite as destructive. In hot climates some varieties of this creature multiply with amazing rapidity, and their voracity seems to keep pace with their increase. They will some-

times issue forth in swarms which lay waste large tracts of fertile country, as completely as the locusts themselves could do it. Before them the land, which was as the garden of Eden, becomes a desolate wilderness. An Italian missionary residing in Congo, was awakened one night by his negroes, who rushed in to warn him that an innumerable multitude of ants was pouring into the house like a torrent. Before he could rise from his bed they were already swarming up his legs; and upon the floors and passages they formed a stratum of considerable depth.

Smith reports that, at Cape Corse, the castle was attacked by legions of ants, preceded by thirty or forty which acted as

guides. He was roused by his servants at daybreak, who told him the ants were approaching. He looked in the direction they intimated, and saw the advancing multitude covering the whole country for a quarter of a mile before him.

The sugar-ants in the West Indies occasionally commit nearly the same ravages. They overrun the whole country, devouring not only the fruits and the foliage of the trees, but everything which could by possibility be eaten, animal and vegetable alike. In some parts of Southern Africa, the Kaffirs avail themselves of the voracity of the ants to put the prisoners who fall into their hands to a most cruel death. They peg them down to the ground in the neighbourhood of one of the ant-hills, or sometimes over one of the smaller ant-hills itself, firmly securing the wrists, ankles, and neck to posts driven into the ground. The ants, which come out of their holes at sundown, in the course of a few hours devour every particle of flesh, skin, sinew, and clothing, leaving only the bare and whitened skeleton.

Various modes are adopted by the natives to rid themselves of this pest. Sometimes they dig deep trenches which they fill with water up to the brim, in the spots which they know the ants are likely to traverse. The insects, which never turn to the right or left, pour headlong into these excavations and are drowned. But the invading host continues to advance, until at length the ditches are choked by the enormous numbers, and the succeeding files pass uninjured over the corpses of their brethren. Sometimes fire is the agent employed. Large bonfires are kindled into which, as into the ditches, the ants rush in countless myriads, and perish in the flames. But after a while the immense masses extinguish the flames, and the rearguard moves on unchecked. The most effective means of withstaying them is gunpowder. Successive trains fired at the moment when the legions are crossing over them sometimes do succeed in checking their advance. But Nature herself, using the agency of the hurricane or the tornado, is the only sure exterminator.

But the ants are not so remarkable for the prodigious mul-

titudes to which they occasionally swell, as for their extraordinary powers of combination and the greatness of the works they execute. They are without brain, and the insignificance of their size would seem to render it impossible for them to accomplish anything on any considerable scale, yet the dwelling-places they rear for themselves are often larger and higher than those which man erects for his abode. If human habitations attained the same height in proportion to man's stature, which those of the termites bear to that of their architects, they would be fifty times higher than the ordinary English mansion. Sir John Lubbock, who has carefully studied their habits, maintains that the ants have a fair claim to rank next to man in the scale of intelligence.

Other animals are capable of combining together for joint operations, as, for example, the beavers and the bees, but not nearly to the same extent as the ants. These not only build houses for their common residence, as the above-named animals also do, but they collect together stores of grain,[3] they fortify their houses, they make wars, and bring home captives whom they employ as their slaves, they defend their own castles if attacked, they nurse their young with all the care that human beings could bestow upon them, and it is even said that they bury their dead with funeral honours.

But the most extraordinary feature in their history is their division into three classes, the males, the females, and the Amazons as they are often called, being imperfectly formed females. The whole work of the community is laid upon the last-named class, which, in some species of ants, is divided into two sections, the soldiers and the operatives. The latter perform all the drudgery of daily life; the former go out to battle, when war is declared. The females of course have their proper sphere of duty in the nursery department; and as

[3] The words of Solomon (Prov. vi. 6), "Go to the ant, thou sluggard; consider her ways and be wise; which provideth her meat in summer, and gathereth her food in the harvest," have been misapprehended. The wise king does not mean that the stores laid up by the ant are for winter consumption. They are designed to protect their nests from damp. The ant in all northern countries is torpid during the winter, and feeds for the most part on animal matter.

for the males—they fully carry out the idea of Sardanapalus, repeated afterwards by Aristophanes, that it befitted a gentleman to do nothing but eat and drink and wive. The languid beauties of an Eastern seraglio are not more helpless than these fine gentlemen, without the help of slaves. Huber confined thirty fighting Amazons in a box with a sufficient supply of food for their wants. But they knew no more how to feed themselves than a new-born infant, and fifteen of them absolutely died of starvation in the immediate vicinity of the honey provided for them. The rest would have died in like manner, if Huber had not introduced into the box a single slave, which forthwith took the management of affairs into its own hands, and fed the Amazons.

STRANGE PLANTS

Chapter XXIII

Fabulous Plants—Mandrake—Mistletoe—Vervain—Lotus—Upas—Banyan—Californian Cypress

One would scarcely have imagined that the vegetable world would be made the subject of the wild fancies with which men have invested the mysterious inhabitants of the wilderness and the ocean. Yet it is certainly the fact that quite as strange tales have been told by travellers and romancers, of the plants, with which the one have come into contact in foreign lands, and the others have gathered from ancient myth and legend—as ever have been put forward of the kraken or the basilisk. On no subject has the imagination of Pliny run more wild, than on the marvels he ascribes to one herb or another. If we are to believe him there is no malady incident to humanity, which may not be cured by the use—not merely of one plant, but of at least a dozen!

But greater powers than these have been attributed to plants. We are told they can even recall the dead to life. Apollodorus who flourished at Athens, *circa* A.D. 140, Ælian and others, relate how Polyidus, the seer, restored to life Prince Glaucus, the son of Minos, King of Crete. The prince had fallen into a cask of honey and had been suffocated. Unable to find the corpse of his son, Minos consulted the oracle of Apollo and received for answer that whoever could solve a certain riddle which the God propounded, would be able to restore the son to his father. The riddle was, What object in nature did a cow marked with three colours—white, dun and black—most resemble? Minos assembled his astrologers and

wise men, but none of them could supply the answer, until a Corinthian stranger named Polyidus, stepped forward and said that the object required was the mulberry, which was, in the progressive stages to ripeness, white, yellow and black. Polyidus was thereupon required to find the missing prince, and by the help of some bees discovered the cask in which the body was enclosed. Not considering this to be a "restoration" of the prince, Minos required Polyidus to reanimate the corpse, and the seer being unable to do this, was entombed along with the dead body. While in the vault he beheld a serpent enter, and approach the body. He instantly killed it, but after a while, another serpent appeared carrying a herb, which it laid on its dead companion. The latter was, in a moment, restored to life; and Polyidus, seizing the herb, tried the same experiment on the corpse of Glaucus and with the same result. (Apollod. III. 3; Ælian, N. H. v. 2.)

Pliny (XXV. 5) tells just such another story, on the authority of Xanthus the historian. A young serpent having been killed by a youth named Thylo, the mother killed him in revenge. She then fetched a herb called balis, which she laid on the dead young-one and thereby restored it to life. A looker-on took up the herb, and in the same manner laid it on the dead Thylo; whereupon he also was renewed to life.

Mr. B. Gould tells a similar tale. "In the Greek romance of Rhodante and Dosicles," he writes, "is an incident of a similar character. Rhodante swallows a poisoned draught and falls dead. Meanwhile Dosicles and Cratander are chasing wild beasts in the forest. There they find a wounded bear which seeks a certain plant, and rolling upon it recovers health and vigour. The root of this herb was white, its flowers of a rosy hue, attached to a stalk of purplish tinge. Dosicles picks the herb and with it returns to the house, where he finds Rhodante lying stiff and cold. With the wondrous plant he is able to restore her." The same story is told in Germany, in Lithuania, among the modern Greeks, and ancient Scandinavians.

In La Motte Fouqué's romance of "Sir Elidoc," which is founded on the "Lay of Elidoc" (in Ellis's "Early English

Romances") and embodies an ancient Breton legend, there is an incident very nearly the same. Two mourners are represented as watching the corpse of a lady in a sepulchral chamber, when suddenly, a weasel makes its appearance and is killed by a blow from a staff thrown at it by one of the watchers. Presently another weasel appears, and finding its companion dead, departs, returning presently with a plant in its mouth which is laid on that of its dead companion. The latter stretches itself and springs suddenly up, with the root still in its mouth. The two spectators of this strange scene, possess themselves of the wonderful herb; which they apply

after the same fashion to the lips of the dead lady, when "she sighs, and clasps her hands; the bloom returns to the marble features, and she opens her eyes, restored to life." What can have originated this wild fancy unless it be some legend of the supposed miraculous powers inherent in the staff of the prophet Elisha, which by his order was laid on the face of the dead child of the Shunammite—I am unable to conjecture.

Besides the power of raising the dead to life, plants are said to possess many magical properties. The seed of the fern was believed, like the ring of Gyges, to render any one who wore it invisible. The mystical *Herba meropis* or "wood-pecker

plant" could burst its way through whatever obstacle might present itself. In the German folk-lore a man is represented as plucking a blue flower, which he finds by the roadside, and which possesses (though the man knows it not) such virtue that the rocks give way before it. As he passes along, he sees a chasm in the stony side of the mountain, which he enters. He finds the whole floor of the seeming cave strewn with gold, and a lovely lady invites him to help himself, which he does, noway unwilling. In the eagerness with which he prosecutes this agreeable employment, he lets the flower drop, and the spell being in this manner dissolved, the rocks shut to again with a tremendous crash. According to one version of the story, he is crushed by the stony portals; according to another, he escapes, though with the loss of his heel.

Pliny tells us (XXV. 5) that the woodpecker brings up its young in the hollow of a tree, and if the entrance to this be closed by a wedge driven in by a shepherd, the bird will bring a certain herb, which will cause the wedge to spring out again. Ælian (H. A. III. 26) relates the same story of the hoopoe, and the plant employed by the bird appears to be lucerne.

The reader of the "Arabian Nights" will remember the story of "Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves," and the mention of the plant "sesame" which, it appears, had the magical property of causing the rocks to fly open and disclose the cave, where the robbers' treasures were concealed. Mr. Baring Gould conjectures, and with some probability, that in the original story the plant itself was employed to effect the entrance through the rocks. Other tales are told of boughs and flowers, gifted with the power of sending everyone to sleep who is within the sphere of their influence. So the God, Somnus, is represented as overcoming Palinurus's watchfulness by shaking over his head a bough steeped in Lethé (Virgil, "Æneid," V.), which compels him to fall asleep against his will. Others are endued with more terrible and deadly influences, which it was accounted unlawful to employ.

The most notorious among these was the Mandrake or

Briony, which was said to grow among mouldering bones and decaying coffins. It was held to be alike dangerous and sinful to gather it. It was indeed reported that whoever did this, was placed in the most mortal peril; for not only was the act itself a deadly sin, but the plant when uprooted uttered a shriek, which slew with horror any one who heard it. Human ingenuity, however, can overcome any obstacle, and the ingenious device was adopted of digging the earth away, until the root was completely loosened, and attaching a string to it, the other end of which was secured to the collar of a dog. The man then, with his ears tightly closed with wax, walked away, and the dog endeavouring to follow, tore up the plant and fell dead, as it heard the shriek.

All the guilt of the transaction being imputed to the unhappy dog, the man might handle the uprooted plant without danger. Why the mandrake gatherers could not have had the common humanity to stop up the dog's ears also with wax, does not appear.

But when the plant had at last been secured by the roundabout process above described, its effects were truly wonderful. Among many other properties, it could cast out the demons which had taken possession of a man—no matter how strong these might be—and could recall the sick to health, even in the very article of death. This superstition is referred to by Southey in the ninth canto of "Thalaba."

"She knew the place where the mandrake grew;
And round the neck of the ounce
And round the mandrake's head
  She tightens the ends of her cord:
Her ears are closed with wax,
And her press'd finger fastens them
Deaf as the adder, when with grounded head
And circled form both avenues of sound
Barr'd safely, one slant eye
  Watches the charmer's lips
Waste on the winds his baffled witchery.
  The spotted ounce so beautiful
  Springs forceful from the scourge.

With that the dying plant, all agony,
Feeling its life-strings crack,
Uttered the unimaginable groan
That none can hear and live."

The Mistletoe was regarded by our fathers with almost as much awe and reverence. The Druids considered the plant not only as the emblem, but as the actual residence, of the Deity. They wore garlands of it round their foreheads, and adorned their altars with its foliage. They not only believed it to be endued with divine virtues, but thought that every bunch of it which appeared was sent as a token of the special favour of Heaven. It was sought for with the utmost care on the sixth day of the new moon; and whenever it was reported to have been found, the greatest joy was manifested. As soon as the auspicious intelligence had been received, the Druids made preparations for a sacrifice to be offered to the Deity, under the oak, on which the sacred plant had made its appearance. Two white bulls—the prescribed offering—were led to the spot, and were secured to the trunk. Then the Arch-Druid, robed in white, ascended the tree, and with a golden knife cut off the mistletoe, amid the rapturous shouts of the multitude below. Carrying the precious plant in the hollow of his robe, he descended, and the bulls were sacrificed. The mistletoe, so obtained, was thought to be gifted with power of healing the diseases of all to whom it was administered.

Vervain again has in all ages, and by quite different races, been regarded with a superstitious veneration, for which it is difficult to account. Among the ancient Romans this plant was the one used on the most solemn occasions. The altars of the gods were cleansed with it; the crowns which the heralds wore, when sent on an embassy of peace or war, were made of it; it was used when divinations were made by lot. Those who had been anointed with it, were sure to obtain their wishes, were able to heal quarrels among friends, and cure all diseases. It was to be gathered about "the rising of the Dog-star," at a time when neither sun nor moon was visible, a

libation of honey having been first made. The earth was to be marked in a circle round it with an iron tool: it was then to be extracted with the left hand and immediately held up on high. The leaves, the stalk and the root were all to be dried separately. If the dinner-table was sprinkled with water in which it had been dipped, it promoted good fellowship. By the Druids vervain was regarded with a pious awe, only second to that paid to the mistletoe, and it was gathered with solemn ceremonies, as the former was. In later times it was considered to be a potent charm against witches. The old rhyme said that—

> "Trefoil, vervain, John's wort, dill,
> Hindered witches of their will."

One can understand why trefoil, regarded as the emblem of the blessed Trinity, and why John's wort, sacred to St. John, should have been accounted hallowed plants. But the claims of vervain are a more difficult matter.

The Lotus is another plant respecting which some wild notions have been entertained. In the ninth book of the "Odyssey" Ulysses is represented as having been driven by adverse winds from the island of Cerigo, to some country on the African coast, which Homer calls the land of the Lotophagi, or lotus-eaters. Whoever fed upon this herb was said straightway to forget his home and his country, and to have no wish in life left, but to feed on the delicious plant.

Herodotus (IV. 7) describes the country of the Lotophagi as being situated on a promontory near the Gulf of Khabs, which Rawlinson identifies with Zarzis. He says the inhabitants of that country live entirely on the lotus: that it is about the size of the lentisk, and has a sweet taste like the date. He adds that the natives obtain from the plant a kind of wine; which may be the explanation of the results which the herb is supposed to produce.

Mungo Park, when travelling through the Moorish kingdom of Lodomas, says he saw, for the first time, the people gathering the fruit of the lotus. It is a small farinaceous

berry of a yellow colour, and a delicious taste. The natives convert the berry into a sort of bread, by exposing it for some days to the sun, and afterwards pounding it gently in a wooden mortar, until the farinaceous parts are separated from the stones. This meal is then mixed with a little water and formed into cakes, which, when dried in the sun, resemble in colour and in flavour, the sweetest gingerbread. This shrub is found in the northern coast of Barbary, and there can be little doubt, that it was the food of the ancient Lotophagi.

There are many other plants which produce the intoxicating effects described. The reader will remember the fourth voyage of Sindbad, in the course of which he and his companions are thrown upon an island, where they meet some savages, who ply them with a kind of food which renders them wholly insensible to everything that is passing around them. They continue to eat of it, until they have become sufficiently plump, to suit the palates of their captors, when they are killed and eaten.

Purchas tells us that the Indians have a herb which causes such distraction that a man does not understand what is done in his presence. "Sometimes," he writes, "it maketh a man sleep as if he were dead, for the space of twenty-four hours, except his feet be washed with cold water, which restoreth him to himself. Given in much quantity it killeth him." (Purchas, chap. 13.)

Le Grand says that on the eastern coast of Africa, there is a herb, called by the Portuguese "dutro," and by the Kaffirs "banguini," which has this wonderful quality, that, taken in meat or drink, it entirely deprives a man of reason for the space of twenty-four hours.

But the plant, respecting which the strangest and most extravagant tales have been not only circulated but believed—is the Upas tree of Java. In the third canto of the "Botanic Garden," Darwin gives a descripion of this celebrated tree.

> Fierce in dread silence on the blasted heath,
> Fell Upas sits, the Hydra tree of death.
> Lo from one root the envenomed soil below,
> A thousand vegetable serpents grow.

In shiny rays the scaly monster spreads,
O'er ten square leagues his far-diverging heads
Or in one trunk entwists his tangled form,
Looks o'er the cloud, and hisses in the storm.
Steeped in fell poison, as his sharp teeth part,
A thousand tongues in quick vibration dart,
Snatch the proud eagle towering o'er the heath,
Or pounce the lion as he stalks beneath,
Or strew, as martial hosts contend in vain,
With human skeletons the whitened plain.

This terrible picture was derived in the first instance from vague floating reports, which had long been current, respecting this extraordinary tree. They were probably first introduced into Europe by the Dutch soldiers and sailors, obtaining a certain amount of credence with the general public. But it was not until a traveller named Foersch, who had been surgeon to the Dutch forces at Samarang, on the coast of Java, published a detailed description of the Upas in 1783, that the marvels circulated respecting it, obtained general belief.

Two years after the appearance of the book, its statements were inserted, without any expression of doubt, in a periodical work, called "The London Magazine," which was regarded by readers in general as a sufficient authority. Other writers drew their information from its pages, and for many years the statements were accepted as true.

M. Foersch says that he himself long doubted the existence of this tree, or rather doubted the reports current respecting it; but a strict inquiry had convinced him of his error. He assures his readers, that he not only relates simple unadorned facts, but facts of which he had himself been an eye-witness. These facts are as follows.

There is a poison in use in the island of Java, the effects of which are unusually rapid and fatal. Anyone who has been pricked with a weapon dipped in it, dies in the course of a few minutes, and in the greatest agonies. He says that he saw thirteen women on one occasion, and seven men on another, put to death in this manner. He was told that the poison was procured from a tree called the Upas, which grew, by itself,

in a desolate valley surrounded on all sides by mountains. There was only one tree of the kind, and it had sprung up out of the earth, in consequence of a fearful curse which had been laid on the country for its wickedness. The whole face of the land for fifteen miles round it was said to be blasted and rendered desolate by its poisonous effluvia, which was destructive alike to animal and vegetable life. The poisonous gum which distilled from the trunk could, of course, be obtained only at the imminent risk of those who approached it for the purpose. No rewards could induce anyone to volunteer for such a service. But criminals who had been condemned to die by being inoculated with its juice, were in general willing to avail themselves of the feeble chance which a visit to the tree afforded them, in preference to the certainty of a death still more painful. They were accordingly despatched, each wearing a long pair of leather gloves, and covered with a deep leather hood descending as far as the breast, fitted with two glass eyelet-holes to enable the wearers to see their way. Each carried a silver box, in which to collect the deadly gum.

The adventurers were accompanied by their friends to the house of an old priest, which was situated on a spot fifteen or sixteen miles from the tree, and was considered to be only just outside its baleful influence. M. Foersch obtained a letter of introduction to this priest, and accompanied a party of criminals to his house. The old man assured him that he had sent out above seven hundred persons in the manner described, of whom scarcely a tenth had returned.

"I was present," writes M. Foersch, "at some of these melancholy ceremonies, and desired different delinquents to bring me pieces of wood, or a small branch, or some leaves of this wonderful tree. I gave them also silk cords, desiring them to measure its thickness. I never could procure more than two dried leaves that were picked up by one of them on his return, and all that I could learn from him about the tree itself was, that it stood alone on the border of a rivulet, that it was of a middling size, that no other shrubs grew near it,

that the ground was of a brownish sand, full of stones, almost impracticable for travelling, and covered with dead bodies; which remained entire, as the insects which would naturally have preyed on them, could no more live than any other creatures. It is certain," adds M. Foersch, "though it may appear incredible, that for from fifteen to eighteen miles round this tree, not only no human creature can exist, but that in that space of ground no living thing of any kind has ever been discovered. I have also been assured that there are no fish in the waters. When any birds fly so near the tree that the effluvia reaches them, they fall a sacrifice to the effects of the poison."

I remember reading many years ago a tale in an Annual, which made a great impression on my boyish fancy, respecting this dreadful tree. A pair of lovers who had been condemned to death (though of course really guiltless), set out together, with their silver boxes, hoods and long gloves, all *en règle*. The wind being in the direction favourable for the attempt they proceed safely for some distance, when they perceive that they are pursued by an enormous serpent, which has ventured incautiously into the perilous region. They fly, but the monster gains on them, and they would have been overtaken, but that their pursuer pauses to drink of the stream along whose banks the path lay. This flows under the fatal tree, and its waters having been impregnated with the poison the serpent falls in a moment dead. They reach the tree and gather the gum; but the miasma is after all too much for them, and they are falling into the drowsy state which precedes death, when a sudden storm bursts forth, the lightnings and the torrents of rain purify the air, and restore life to the expiring lovers; who return in safety with their boxes filled with the poison, and, it is to be presumed, live happy afterwards.

When Sir Stamford Raffles went to reside as Governor of Java, he caused some inquiry to be made respecting this extraordinary tree. Dr. Horsfield at his request drew up a full description of it, and the poisonous gum that it distills. He pronounces M. Foersch's statements to be in the main ex-

travagant forgeries, except so far as the existence of the poison and its virulent effects are concerned. The whole tale respecting the desolation of the country for miles round the tree, of the absence of animal and vegetable life within a certain radius, and the danger incurred by those who procure the poison is purely fictitious. It is not impossible that M. Foersch was imposed upon by some of the natives, who found their market in supplying him with monstrous inventions which were greedily caught at, or perhaps amused themselves at his expense. It is difficult to believe that he could have deliberately invented the statements he propagated.

"The upas, or anchar," says Dr. Horsfield, "is one of the largest trees in the forests of Java. The trunk is cylindrical, perpendicular, and rises completely naked to a height of sixty, seventy, or eighty feet. Near the surface of the ground it spreads obliquely. It is covered with a whitish bark. Near the ground this bark is, in old trees, more than half an inch thick, and upon being wounded, yields plentifully the milky juice from which the celebrated poison is prepared. The inner bark is of a close fibrous texture, and when separated from the other bark and cleansed from the adhering particles, resembles a coarse piece of linen. This has been worked into ropes, which are very strong: and the poorer class of people employ the inner bark of the younger trees for the purpose of making a coarse stuff which they wear when working in the fields. The tree, like all others in the vicinity, is surrounded by shrubs and plants. In no instance have I observed the ground to be naked or barren in its immediate circumference. The largest upas was so completely and closely environed by the common trees and shrubs of the forest in which it grew, that it was with difficulty that I could approach it. Several vines and climbing shrubs in complete health and vigour adhered to it, and ascended to nearly half its height."

Dr. Horsfield also saw several experiments made on animals with the juice of the upas. The effects were tremor, faintness, convulsions, increasing in violence, and finally death,

at a longer or shorter interval, according to the strength of the animal experimented upon. A mouse died in ten minutes; a monkey in seven; a cat, in fifteen; a dog, within the hour; a buffalo, in two hours and ten minutes. A man who had been wounded by an arrow steeped in the juice, died in half an hour. It should be added that the Javanese are acquainted with a herb, which, if applied in time, counteracts the effects of the poison.

Discarding fable altogether, the accounts given by travellers (the accuracy of which, though questioned at first, has been fully established) of the enormous height and span of trees in warm climates, are truly astonishing. The Gum-trees of Australia attain an altitude of three hundred feet, and a circumference, at about two or three feet from the ground, of more than a hundred. In the Brazilian forests there are trees whose trunks fifteen Indians joining hands can only just encompass. The species of fig, called the Banyan, spreads to a bulk which far exceeds that of any other tree, not indeed by the increase of the central stem, but by the multiplication of innumerable new trunks thrown off from the original. As the branches spread laterally in all directions, they throw shoots downwards, which take root in the soil, and grow, as it were, into fresh trees, in their turn sending out horizontal branches, and descending shoots; until what seems a vast forest is formed, containing long arcades of greenery, affording at once a safe shelter and a delicious coolness. Popular assemblies have been sometimes held under these trees. Forbes, in his oriental "Memoirs," affirms that as many as seven thousand persons have been gathered together at the same time under a single banyan. The Muse of Southey has never been more happily employed than in its description.

"It was a goodly sight to see
  That venerable tree,
For o'er the lawn irregularly spread
Fifty straight columns propped its lofty head:
And many a long depending shoot
  Seeming to strike its root

Straight like a plummet grew toward the ground.
Some on the lower boughs which crossed their way,
Fixing their bearded fibres round and round
With many a ring and wild contortion wound.
And through the leafy cope which bowered it o'er,
Came gleams of chequered light.
So like a Temple did it seem, that there
A pious heart's first impulse had been prayer."

Kehama, Canto xiii.

The Baobab of Southern Africa, though rarely rising to an elevation of more than eighty feet, is frequently fully as much in circumference.

But the largest trees which the experience of travellers has revealed to the world are the Cypresses of California.

And with this additional evidence of the wonders of the Californian climate I will close my work.

THE END